

רוֹטָמָרִי



127 215

UNIVERSAL
LIBRARY

Keep Your Card in This Pocket

Books will be issued only on presentation of proper library cards.

Unless labeled otherwise, books may be retained for four weeks. Borrowers finding books marked, defaced or mutilated are expected to report same at library desk; otherwise the last borrower will be held responsible for all imperfections discovered.

The card holder is responsible for all books drawn on his card.

Penalty for over-due books 2c a day plus cost of notices.

Lost cards and change of residence must be reported promptly.



PUBLIC LIBRARY
Kansas City, Mo.

Keep Your Card in this Pocket

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS
VOL. II

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

BY

MRS. HUGH FRASER

Author of "A Diplomatist's Wife in Japan,"
"A Diplomatist's Wife in Many Lands,"
"Reminiscences of a Diplomatist's
Wife," etc.

VOL. II



NEW YORK
DODD, MEAD AND COMPANY
1913

COPYRIGHT, 1913, BY
DODD, MEAD AND COMPANY
Published November, 1913

CONTENTS OF VOL. II

CHAPTER I

	PAGE
SAINTS OF THE CHURCH	I
A Friend in Rome—A Story of Two Ways of Loving—Aglaë and Boniface—Become Christians—A New Life—Boniface Endures Terrible Tortures—Martyrdom—Death of Aglaë—Church of St. Boniface—Alexis, the Pilgrim—His Travels—Return to Rome—A Ragged Beggar—His Death and Burial in St. Boniface's Church—St. Alexis' Monastery—Trials of the Church After Constantine—Rome's Lowest Ebb—Growth of the Spiritual City—Benedict the Blessed, and Scholastica.	

CHAPTER II

FOUNDER OF MONASTICISM	15
Norcia in the Sabines—A Matrona—The Twins, Benedict and Scholastica—Benedict Goes to Rome—Conversion of Placidus—Benedict's Retirement to La Mentorella—Life in a Cave—Temptations—Visit of St. Francis—Benedict's Ministering—Real Founder of Monastic Life—Growth of His Order—Placidus and Maurus—St. Benedict's Personality and Conversations—His Ideal of the Religious Life—His Greatest Miracles—His Sister, Scholastica—The Last Day Together—His Ascension.	

CHAPTER III

ST. GREGORY THE GREAT	37
Birth and Lineage of St. Gregory—Path from the World to the Cloister—Prayer, Study, and Charity—His Cat—A Prophecy—A Cardinal Deacon—Mission to Constantinople—Eutyches' Heresy—Rome in Pestilence—Gregory Elected Pope—His Unbelievable Accomplishments—His Life as Pope—Championship of the Oppressed—Bond with English-speaking People—The Great Procession During the Pestilence—Gregory's Successors.	

CHAPTER IV

MEMORIES OF THE PANTHEON	52
The Pantheon—Hadrian's Best Monument—Long Idle—Consecrated as St. Mary of the Martyrs—The Cathedral, the Symbol of the Soul—Its Purification—Continuity of the Church—A	

CONTENTS

PAGE

Priest's Visit—The Alabaster Square—Procession of the Martyrs' Relics—Giovanni Borgi, the Workman—Italian Guilds—Giovanni's Selflessness—His Rescue of the Forsaken Children—Care of Them—Crusade in Behalf of All the Waifs of Rome—His Work of Love—Giovanni's Successor, Later Pius IX.

CHAPTER V

EARLY LIFE OF FATHER MASTAI 70

Birth in 1792—A Happy Family—His Youth—Epilepsy—The Church at the Time of Napoleon—Abduction of Pius to Avignon—Napoleon's Downfall—Return of the Pope to Rome—His Reception—Prophecies Regarding Pius IX—His Journey to Chile—Ocean Trip—Across the Andes—Failure of Mission—Round-ing Cape Horn—English Settlement on the Cape—“Love-of-the-Soil”—The Falkland Islands.

CHAPTER VI

POPE PIUS IX 91

Director of Ospizio di San Michele—A Splendid Record—Arch-bishop of Spoleto—A Turbulent Populace—Order Restored—Revolution in Europe—Spoleto Saved—The Earthquake in Umbria—New Post at Imola—Secret Societies—A Cardinal—Attack upon the Three Prelates—The Cardinal's Bravery—How the Saints Forgive—Pope Pius IX—His Charity and Justice—De-fenders of the Poor—Anecdotes of the Cardinal's Generosity.

CHAPTER VII

CAPTIVITY OF POPE PIUS VII 108

Lebzelter, the Ambassador of the Austrian Emperor—Origin of His Mission—Napoleon's Anger Against Pius VII—Arrest of the Pope—Protests from the Church—Napoleon Excommunicated—Vain Efforts to Evade the Bull—Instructions for the Mission—“Do All, or Else, *Do Nothing*”—Pius VII in His Sixty-eighth Year—The Interview—The Pope's Position—His Generosity—Message to Napoleon—Continued Captivity—Re-turn to Rome—Napoleon's Expiation.

CHAPTER VIII

IN SABINA 131

Castel Gandolfo—Its Gardens—The Sabine Hills—The Rever-endo—An Expedition into the Hills—The Campagna in the Early Morning—“Our Lady of Good Counsel”—Ancient Preneste—Italy's Landscape—Struggles of the Colonna—

CONTENTS

PAGE

Destruction of Palestrina—Boniface's Revenge and Expiation—
Olevano, the Haunt of Artists—“Picturesque Utility”—The
Wrong Train—Romance of a Pebble—The Work of the Saints.

CHAPTER IX

PEOPLE OF THE HILLS 152

The Apennines—View from a Peak—Real Hospitality—Polenta—
Woods of Sabina—A Hill Family—The Cook—A Queer Ad-
venture—People of the South—A Night Festival in the Abruzzi—
The Journey—The Old Organ—Marion Crawford's Boys—
Juvenile Theatricals.

CHAPTER X

A STORY OF VENICE 172

A Follower of the Condottieri—The Raw Recruit—Division of
the Dukedom of Milan—Carmagnola's Turn—Growth in
Wealth and Power—Disaffection—Venice Acquires His Services—
War with Milan—A Leisurely Campaign—Carmagnola at
the Height of His Glory—Fortune Turns Against the Vene-
tians—Stirrings of Suspicion—Reception in Venice—The Senate
Chamber—Growing Dusk—The Attack—End of His Part in
the World—Another Story of the North—St. Raniero, the Patron
of Pisa—The Power of Temperance.

CHAPTER XI

QUEEN JOAN OF NAPLES 191

A Conspicuous Feminine Sinner—Marriage of State—Her
Beauty—Her Hungarian Husband—Petrach and the Monk—
Joan's Ascent to the Throne—The Naples Succession—Her Fa-
vourites—The Churches of Naples—Joan's Lovers—Factions of
Naples—Charles of Durazzo—A Bold Proposal—Charles' Am-
bitious Plots—War of the Factions—Disappearance of Maria
—Becomes the Wife of Charles—Joan's Horror.

CHAPTER XII

A MEDIEVAL NIGHTMARE 208

Pact Between Charles and Andrew of Hungary—Joan's Hom-
age to the Papal Legate—Andrew Ignored—Arrival of An-
drew's Mother—Andrew Upheld by the Pope—His Reprisals—
“The Man Must Die”—The Queen's Conspiracy—Last
Meeting of Charles and Andrew—The Hunting Expedition—
The Banquet in the Monastery—The Murder—Tempest Breaks
over Joan's Head—An Evil Blow at Charles—Trial of An-
drew's Murderers—A Nightmare of Cruelty and Fear.

CONTENTS

PAGE

CHAPTER XIII

THE VAMPIRE-MONARCH FROM HUNGARY 233

Charles' Further Acts as Dictator—Rise of the Favoured Louis of Taranto—Civil War—A Scheme of the Empress of Constantinople—Interference of the King of Hungary—The Empress Again to the Rescue—Hungary's Advance—Death of the Empress—Flight of the Neapolitan Nobles—Joan and Her Husband in Provence—Charles' Well-merited Fate—The King of Hungary's Vengeance—Government by Execution.

CHAPTER XIV

END OF JOAN'S CAREER 246

Joan Detained at Aix—Greeted as a Queen—Joan Pronounced Innocent—Plans to Regain Naples—Sale of a City—Return to Naples—Indecisive War—Proposal for Personal Conflict—Flight of the Royal Family—Maria's Narrow Escape—Hungarians Repulsed—Pope Clement as Intermediary—Departure of the King of Hungary—Festivity in Naples—Death of Louis and Joan's Further Marital Adventures—Joan in Trouble—Her Untimely End.

CHAPTER XV

NAPLES UNDER MURAT 263

Beauty of Naples—Figures of Its History—St. Januarius—Murat, King of Naples—Achievements as King—The Carbonari—England's Promises—Napoleonic Diplomacy—Rise of the Bourbons—Alliance with Austria—Murat's Indecision—Distrust of the Allies—Murat's Statesmanship—Talleyrand's Diplomacy—Naples, the Gay—Conspiracy in the Palace—The Escape from Elba—Ideal Government—War Against Murat—Advance of the Austrians—Murat Driven to Naples—Interview with His Wife—Last Instructions to His Ministers—Escape.

CHAPTER XVI

MURAT'S LAST DAYS 299

Naples in Anarchy—Entrance of Austrians—Murat's Repulse by Napoleon and by Louis—His Demon of Ill-luck—Shipwrecked—Aid in Corsica—Emperor of Austria's Proposal—Attempt Against Naples—Murat Betrayed into Ferdinand's Hands—Murat's "Trial"—Letter to His Wife—Before His "Judges"—A Brave Death—Ferdinand, the "Butcher King."

CONTENTS

PAGE

CHAPTER XVII

ITALIAN SEAS 315

Our Moods and the Seas—Memories in Landscapes—The Healing of the Sea—A Vision in the Bay of Naples—Marion Crawford's Yacht Expected—The Family Together at Leghorn—Lady Paget—A Bathing Scene—Hugh Fraser—"Spannocchi" for Dinner—The Avenging Boatman—Livorno, an Anomaly—Sunset on the Mare Ligure—Bay of Spezia, a Splurge of Colour and Light—A Hail Storm in Venice—The Joy of a Gondola—Moods of Venice—A Giorgione Beauty—The Nurseries of Venice—Her Shops—Saints and Heresies of the Thirteenth Century.

CHAPTER XVIII

SOUTHERN SHORES 339

Melancholy Ravenna—Early Byzantine Architecture—Forests of Stone-pine—Smiles and Tears—The Need of a Little Misfortune—Monte Gargano—Millions of Spanish Merinos—Primæval Forest—A Forest Miracle—Church of the Apparition of St. Michael—Other Apparitions of the Archangel—The Revelation to St. Aubert—The Great Round Church—Order of the Knights of St. Michael—A "Maiden" Fortress of France.

CHAPTER I

SAINTS OF THE CHURCH

A Friend in Rome—A Story of Two Ways of Loving—Aglaë and Boniface—Become Christians—A New Life—Boniface Endures Terrible Tortures—Martyrdom—Death of Aglaë—Church of St. Boniface—Alexis, the Pilgrim—His Travels—Return to Rome—A Ragged Beggar—His Death and Burial in St. Boniface's Church—St. Alexis' Monastery—Trials of the Church After Constantine—Rome's Lowest Ebb—Growth of the Spiritual City—Benedict the Blessed, and Scholastica.

IT was my good fortune, many years ago, to make friends with a woman whose name was as beautiful as her mind — Mary Grace. We met in another hemisphere, under the Southern Cross, and for many days lived together in Chile's one little paradise, Viña del Mar. There, in shady patios trellised with jessamine and bougainvillea, we talked of the impossible — of meeting in Rome and going together to the holy places and making better acquaintance with the Saints. Two or three years later the impossible happened. My Mary, with her daughter Lilium, floated into my mother's drawing-room in the Odescalchi one April afternoon, when the swallows were whirling above the courtyard and the house seemed all roses and sunshine. In the weeks that followed all our dream programme was realised; together we went to the Pope's Mass, together knelt at his feet while Leo XIII laid his hand on Lilium's golden head and blessed us and promised to pray for us and all our dear ones; and together we wandered from place to place in the Eternal City, I, who had known it all my life, learning many things from her who came there for the first time,

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

as so often happens. Of all those pleasant inspiring hours the one we both remembered most appreciatively, I think, was that of our visit to a lonely spot on the Aventine — the hill that somehow has always kept its character and is even to-day very little hurt by the destructions that have defaced most of the other quarters of the town.

My friend was Irish, “pur sang,” and her appreciations were extremely individual ones; things that other people felt obliged to rave about left her quite cold; but, when she had caught and joined the links of some beautiful story that the world had overlooked or forgotten, she became a veritable flame of enthusiasm, and every tiny detail and souvenir she could connect with it had to be sought out and stored in the big warm shrine of her heart. I think, though I am not certain, that she knew the story of the house on the Aventine before she came to Rome. Anyway, it was she who took me there, and we went over story and house together, and were exceedingly loath to come away when the Ave Maria rang over the city and all respectable people turned their faces homewards.

Here is the story, a story of two ways of loving. It is in two parts, and I only learnt the first long after I was familiar with the second. The beginning takes us back to the last years of the Third Century, to the oft-mentioned reign of Diocletian. At that time, although the Aventine had never been one of the most distinguished quarters of Rome, it contained a few dwellings of nobles, who, doubtless, overlooked the mass of poorer houses that swarmed about its base, for the sake of the view, both over the city and towards the sea, from which comes always the pleasant west wind that we Romans

SAINTS OF THE CHURCH

love. I have spoken of the palace of the good Marcella, where in her old age she was so roughly treated by Alaric's Goths; before Marcella's time there lived another noble lady on the Aventine, with very different ideas as to the conduct of life. Her name was Aglaë, not a Roman name, and I fancy she must have come of Greek parentage, although she is spoken of as a noble Roman matron. Of her husband, who seems to have died before the story begins, we are told nothing; her whole existence was wrapped up in a quite unsanctified passion for a handsome pagan called Boniface, a man of generous heart, as the sequel shows, but a sensualist, like most of his class at that time. He adored Aglaë, and the two must have passed some enchanting hours wandering on the terraces of the Aventine villa or sitting hand in hand to watch the sun sinking red into the distant sea. No thought of the future seems to have come to them there, nor any gleam of a scruple as to their way of life. Youth and beauty and love were theirs; this world was sweet, and they had never heard of another.

Then something happened. We are not told what it was — perhaps some miracle witnessed by Boniface at the martyrdom of some obscure Christian, one of those miracles which so often converted a crowd of brutal, mocking bystanders into Christians on the spot. Whatever it was, it rent his soul, summoned his intelligence, and claimed him for ever. If Aglaë was not with him at the moment, he must have rushed to her for one last visit to tell her of it, for her conversion was simultaneous, and sudden as his own. From that moment the lovers renounced each other for the love of Christ, and the remainder of their lives was devoted to atoning for their

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

guilt in the past. Aglaë, in her lonely palace, gave herself up to prayer and penance; Boniface at once joined himself to the band of Christians who made it their business to gather up and bury the bodies of the martyrs. In no other way could he assuage the tumult of pain and repentance that filled his heart at the remembrance of his sins. Diocletian's persecution was not confined to Rome, but was raging in many other parts of the Empire, notably in Asia Minor, and thither Boniface travelled with some devoted companions, in order to help and cheer the poor Christians in their sufferings.

On arriving at Tarsus, St. Paul's city, he got separated from his fellow-travellers, and, wandering around, found that a great number of the Faithful were being cruelly tormented that day, in divers ways, for the name of Christ, and his heart was both torn with compassion for their pains and admiration for their heroism. Approaching them, he kissed their chains and encouraged them to endure these passing tortures for the sake of Him who would so quickly and splendidly reward them by an eternity of joy. Of course he was at once arrested, and the tormentors seem to have tasked their ingenuity in inventing agonies for him to bear. His sins of the flesh were expiated by having his whole body ploughed with hooks of iron, and by spikes of wood run in under his nails and on his limbs; he had spoken sinful words; they poured molten lead into his mouth; he had sinned in the lust of the eyes and the pride of life; the executioners plunged him head downwards in a cauldron of boiling pitch. But from this the Lord delivered him. When they drew him forth, his eyes were clear, his brow unscarred, and he looked once more — his last look — on the fair world where he had been so sinfully happy,

SAINTS OF THE CHURCH

and through it all he praised God aloud, saying, "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, I thank Thee!" Then came the order — so usual when all the torments had failed and the clear spirit still clung to the lacerated body — "Behead him!"

As the axe fell, there was a terrific earthquake, and many of the bystanders were converted then and there, but no one was allowed to touch his body. Meanwhile his friends, who had been seeking for him everywhere, learnt of his martyrdom, and came to gather up his remains. But a strict watch had been set, and it was only after paying five hundred pieces of silver that they could obtain possession of the dear corpse. With love and tears, they anointed it with precious balms and wrapped it in costly coverings and transported it to Rome. During these months Aglaë had been living a life of such whole-hearted repentance that our dear Lord had taken her into great grace; and now, by an exquisite, Divine bit of indulgence — one of those flashes of hot sympathy that come straight from the Sacred Human Heart of Him in Heaven to some poor, broken human heart on earth — He sent an Angel to tell her that her Boniface's body was returning to Rome and that she could go and meet it. So Aglaë, in her sombre penitential dress, her beautiful face covered with a veil, went forth, and, at a given place, saw the little procession approaching from the sea. There was no danger for her in looking at the beloved features now. Very quiet and strong she seems to have been as she met the wayfarers, bade them pause with their holy burden, and then led them back to her own house. There, where he and she had loved and sinned, she received him, who was to leave her no more. Those who had brought him told her of his glorious

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

end, and she thanked the Lord for it again — for the Angel had not let her wait so long for the story. And when she had shown her gratitude by most loving hospitality and precious gifts to those who had brought his body, they went away and left her alone with her beloved. Ask any loving woman what she did then! Which of us would not place our dear tortured dead in our hall of honour, and burn sweet spices round them, and light tall tapers, and fill the place with every fragrance and loveliness that the garden has to give?

All this, we may be sure, Aglaë did for Boniface; but she did that from which most women are debarred. She turned her palace into a Church for his tomb, and prayed near it till she died, and then the poor and suffering, who had been her one care from the day of her conversion, came there and prayed for her soul. But we know that that went straight to Heaven.

So there stood the Church of St. Boniface, and, some two hundred years later, a most noble Roman family had established their own palace close to it, and the Church, as we know it, now includes a part of the house of Alexis. For this is where a great saint grew to manhood, the loved son of rich and affectionate parents. Alexis had every gift of mind, with beauty of countenance and strength of body; and, when the time was ripe, his father and mother betrothed him to a bride of their choosing, good and sweet, and very fair to see. In this they had, for the first time, met with stubborn opposition from the boy, who had never opposed them before. He told them that he had vowed himself to a single life for God's service, and that no earthly bride, however beautiful, should make him swerve from that allegiance. But they, like many other good parents, persisted in their proj-

SAINTS OF THE CHURCH

ect, convinced that they knew what was good for their son; and the preparations for his marriage went merrily forward, each day but adding to the young man's grief and perplexity. Rome was Rome still; he could protest, but he had to obey his father's direct commands, and obey he did; but his vow had been made to a still higher authority, and he meant to keep it, and prayed for grace and guidance to do so, nor were grace and guidance refused him, who, as the Breviary puts it, "was of Rome's noblest, but nobler yet through his great love for Christ."

On the night of his wedding, when the feasting and singing and congratulating were over, and the matrons conducted the bride, probably a child of thirteen or fourteen, to the lighted, perfumed bridal chamber, Alexis would not so much as touch her hand, but, like one Galahad of another time and clime, bade her farewell and departed, having received from God a special command to go on a pilgrimage to the "illustrious Churches of the Universe." He left all behind, riches and servants, and even his name, and for seventeen long years, with no companion but the Lady Poverty, wandered, a nameless poor pilgrim, through all the Holy Places, praising the Redeemer for His great mercies and praying for the hastening of the Kingdom of Heaven.

At the end of those seventeen years, he was one day praying fervently before an image of the Blessed Virgin in the great Church at Edessa, when a voice came from the image, proclaiming his name and rank. The people were greatly excited and wished to show him honour, both for his own sake and because Our Lady Herself seemed to wish it. But Alexis knew better. That strange, sweet voice had not rung in his ears to lure him back to

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

things of earthly pride, and for him the disclosure of his identity was the command to depart from that land. He fled, and boarded the first ship he could find to carry him away from Syria. He never asked the vessel's destination; it was enough for him that he was obeying a command, but he was being led back to where the second phase of his spiritual career awaited him — in his old home in Rome.

As the ship sped north and west, and one by one the lovely Greek islands seemed to come floating towards him, like opals on the shifting sapphire of the sea, he still kept silence, still prayed and praised. What cared he whither her course was set? The white sails might have been angel's wings — so sure was Alexis that God was leading him. Then, when the Apeninnes swam up blue from the bluer water, and scents of violet and orange blossom were wafted out to greet the wanderer, he knew that this was Italy — and home. Still he spoke not — questioned not; past the isles of the Sirens, past Circe's Promontory, still on, past all that shore of coral and pearl, of palm and ilex and olive, with Vesuvius' dark smoke hanging like a menace in the background, the little Syrian galley held her way, and at last the helmsman turned her prow to the land, the sails were all furled but one; the enormous oars worked her up against a rushing yellow current till the long quay was reached, and with a rattling of chains the weary galley slaves shipped their oars and bent down to look, each through his little opening, at "the port of Rome."

With the merchants and the free seamen, Alexis stepped on shore, and gazed at the city of his birth. He had been brought back — for what? Blindly, joyfully, obediently, he had gone forth, to fare alone with God, and

SAINTS OF THE CHURCH

alone with God he was still to be. An hour or so later a haggard mendicant stood at the gate of a palace on the Aventine, asking for charity. That was never refused in that house, and the servants brought him in, showed him a dark corner under a stairway close to the entrance, where they told him he might sleep, and gave him some scraps of food. Humbly and gratefully he accepted it all; he heard them speak of the master and the mistress and the "widow" of the eldest son who was long since dead; and that day or the next he must have seen his father and mother, and the maid who had never been a wife, passing through the courtyards or lingering in the garden. God's ways are not our ways. When He covets the love of certain souls for Himself, He will not share it with any one, and that Divine jealousy leads the chosen soul through hard paths. The hearts that love God intensely are the very ones that are the most loving of their fellows, especially of all who hold close to them in the sacred ties of family affection. But these ties have to be snapped on earth when the Divine Lover so wills — and Saints like Alexis, and poor sinners like the rest of us, have to leave the broken ends in His Hands, knowing that the pain we are made to cause our dear ones is as necessary for them as that which we suffer is for us, and that every pang of theirs is a golden strand in the garment of their immortality. Alexis' parents had sinned against him and Heaven in trying to force him to break his vow of virginity; their son had long forgiven them, but Heaven in its mercy was allowing them to expiate their sin here instead of hereafter, and, through their obstinacy, the young girl who might, wedded to another spouse, have become a joyful mother of children, had to spend her life in their sad house, waiting upon them,

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

and with the prospect of a very lonely age before her when they should have passed away.

We may be sure that many and many a time Alexis longed to emerge from his despised obscurity and comfort them all three, but it was not for that God had brought him back. The command of silence was never lifted, and so the son — the heir — lived on, a ragged beggar, laughed at and also abused by his father's servants, praying in St. Boniface's Church by day, sleeping in the cranny under the stairs at night, allaying his hunger by the scraps the servants threw him, and always blessing them and praising God, who thus satisfied His own servant's hunger for poverty and suffering and humiliation. This second trial, this exile of the heart, lasted also seventeen years. At that time the very existence of Rome was threatened by Alaric the Goth; once and twice, he had turned from its gates laden with the ransom exacted for not entering them; he was threatening to approach again, and this time he had sworn to enter and destroy. The population was crowding the Churches to pray for deliverance, when a mysterious voice rang out in each separate Church, "Seek ye the man of God, that he may pray for Rome!" Terror fell upon the suppliant masses, and none dared speak or move. Then the same voice cried, "Seek in the house of Euphemian."

There was a rush to the Aventine, for all knew the great noble's dwelling. The Pope, Innocent I, had heard the command and himself went thither, followed by all his ecclesiastics and the Senators as well. When they reached Euphemian's house it was the Pope who led them to the dark corner under the stairs — dark no longer, but flooded with celestial light, where the nameless beggar lay dying alone. His hands were already cold, but in one

SAINTS OF THE CHURCH

he held a crucifix, in the other a slip of parchment which no one could make him relinquish, though many tried to take it away from him. Then Innocent commanded him, in the Name of God, to give it up, and immediately Alexis let him take it with his own hand. And the Pope, standing up beside the dying man, opened the slip, and read aloud therefrom the name and family of the beggar; and a great cry went through the house that it was Alexis, the son who had been mourned for dead these many years. And father and mother and wife threw themselves down beside him, embracing him and weeping bitterly, for in that moment his soul had gone to God.

Then Innocent buried him in the Church of St. Boniface, and it was called both by his name and that of Alexis for many years. Both their bodies rest there, and a chapel was thrown out at one side to take in the stairway, which, now covered with glass, remains to this day. Both Boniface and Alexis had travelled and prayed and suffered in the East, and their Church came to be a heritage of both East and West; for, five hundred years after the July day on which Alexis died, a great monastery called after him and built close to the Church on the hill of the “house of Euphemian,” sheltered monks of the Basilian and Benedictine orders at the same time, an innumerable spiritual family “to replace the fair family he had renounced to this world.”

The Aventine has been little touched by time and is still one of the quietest and loveliest spots in Rome. At certain seasons it suffers from malaria — blown up from the marshes near Ostia — and for that reason both mediæval and modern builders have generally avoided it. But it is full of gardens. That of St. Alexis’ Convent, now an Asylum for the Blind, is famous for its orange and

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

lemon trees; and one can trace the dispositions of the terraces and courts of the old house in the approaches to the Church. I do not think that when my friend and I were wandering there we noticed one curious feature which, however, still exists to give one a glimpse of old Roman domestic ways — the queer little cells, one on each side of the inner porch of Euphemian's house, where the slave porter, and his companion the watchdog, were *chained*, opposite to each other, to their respective posts! What queer and sympathetic confidences they must have exchanged sometimes!

Alexis surely prayed for his native city, but all the prayers of all her Saints could not avert the trials that were to visit on Rome her past sins. Constantine the Great believed that he had left the Church in the West impregnable in strength and assured of peace; and for nearly three centuries after his death she was forced to fight for her existence almost as stubbornly as she had during the three centuries preceding it. In 361, only twenty-four years after the death of Constantine, Julian the Apostate reversed his edicts and strained every nerve to reëstablish the worship of the Olympian deities. Paganism was dead, and he failed in his iniquitous efforts to restore animation to its corpse, but much suffering did he bring to the Church, and it was only at the price of blood that she conquered in the end. After Julian came the Barbarians — Alaric, Genseric, Odoacer, Totila — during the short space of one hundred and thirty years Rome was taken and ravaged five separate times, so that when, in 553, Narses, the prototype of Napoleon, abolished the Senate and annexed the city to the Eastern Empire, she had reached the lowest point in her history and was scarcely regarded as a prize even by the Lombards,

SAINTS OF THE CHURCH

when, in response to the invitation of Narses himself, they overran Italy from the Alps to the sea, only to be finally expelled by Charlemagne some two hundred years later.

But the Church had realised the truth of the saying that the darkest hour comes just before the dawn. The high courage that had come unscathed through such appalling conflicts rose gallant and audacious in its certainty of final victory, and, at the very moment when Rome seemed to be annihilated, decreed to it such a triumph as the world had never seen before.

In 568, just a year after Narses, to gratify a personal spite, had invited the hornet swarm of Lombards to cross the Alps, he died in the city he had insulted. We must remember that there were two Romes: the corporeal city, depopulated and impoverished, despoiled and dying — the city of the government of the once proud “*Senatus Populusque Romanus*,” which had failed signally at every point, and had crawled to the feet of every conqueror; and the spiritual city, ruled by strong and holy men, who patiently went on with their invisible building, adding stone to stone with such calmness and patience that in contemplating their work one is almost led to believe that they were unconscious of the material ruin around them. During the forty years that followed the death of Narses there was growing up in Rome a phalanx of learned and holy ones to replace the leaders who had been found wanting, and we of to-day are still the inheritors and possessors of the treasures they amassed. While the grass grew unchecked in the streets and all who could migrated to happier lands; while commerce and war turned aside from the now worthless prize, and the poor tethered their few goats and sheep in the court-

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

yards of the great ruined houses, the Benedicts, the Gregorays, the Bonifaces, with their clear-eyed, disciplined cohorts, were building the Liturgy, building the monastic orders, building the polity that guides and rules the Church and the Faithful to-day. Nothing escaped them; whether it were a question of the right antiphon for one of the psalms of a Nocturn, the placing on the Index some doubtful legend of a Saint (like that of our St. George, which the popular fancy was turning into a grotesque myth), the annihilation of some startling new heresy which was raising its poisonous head, or the question of bringing Constantinople to its senses by bold remonstrance with the Emperor — to every detail was brought the thoroughness and directness of trained minds, the compelling force of superior courage and invincible intellect.

And this work had been going on silently and infallibly from the moment that official persecution ceased. Through sieges and invasions, desertions and desolations, the mills of God were grinding the grain and filling the great storches with golden wealth. In 480, in the little town of Nursia, high among the fastnesses of the Abruzzi, where the snow lay thick in winter, as in the Alps, there was born to the lord of the place a son, who was christened Benedict — “the Blest,” and a little daughter, whom the father, a great admirer of learning, called Scholastica. When these two passed away, sixty-three years later, Literature and Saintliness were throned in Europe, and hold their thrones still in the innumerable fortresses manned by the spiritual descendants of the Nursian twins. Outside the Church few, comparatively, knew their names when they died. Learning and piety would scarcely exist for us had they not lived.

CHAPTER II

FOUNDER OF MONASTICISM

Norcia in the Sabines—A Matrona—The Twins, Benedict and Scholastica—Benedict Goes to Rome—Conversion of Placidus—Benedict's Retirement to La Mentorella—Life in a Cave—Temptations—Visit of St. Francis—Benedict's Ministering—Real Founder of Monastic Life—Growth of His Order—Placidus and Maurus—St. Benedict's Personality and Conversions—His Ideal of the Religious Life—His Greatest Miracles—His Sister, Scholastica—The Last Day Together—His Ascension.

Nin the heart of the Sabines, where the Nar breaks out from the rock near the mountain called the Lioness, there has been since very early times a little town, too inaccessible to tempt the spoiler and the invader, too sturdy and independent to serve long as a footstool for mediæval tyrants. It was well fortified, however, and the ancient walls encircle it still, in good repair, as witnesses to its immunity from the fate that has annihilated so many other little old cities, its neighbours. Nature, stern and wild enough here, helped to protect it. Even now it can only be reached by a carriage journey, a lengthy, tedious business in the winter time, when the snow almost cuts it off from communication with the outside world. The townsfolk have long memories, however. The chief square is called Piazza Sertorio, after the Roman General, Quintus Sertorius, who was born here in the second century before Christ, and the only public monument in Norcia is a statue of their other distinguished citizen, St. Benedict, in the same square. People from other places do not interest the good burghers

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

of Norcia. They have accorded a passing notice to a gentleman named Vespasian, known elsewhere as a fairly successful Emperor, but as they would tell you, "a person quite without education," that is to say, with no manners nevertheless, they have allowed a hill in the vicinity to be called Monte Vespasio, because his mother was a decent woman and owned a farm there.

I fancy life in Norcia is in its essentials very much what it was when, in the year of grace 480, the lord of the manor was informed that his good wife had borne him twins, a son and a daughter. It is easy, knowing the ways of the people, to call up the picture of the "matrona" in her best gown — the midwife is the most honoured woman in every Roman town — coming down from the lady's apartment in the tower, to the head of the house, sitting, quite forgotten and rather lonely, in the hall, waiting for news from the centre of interest upstairs. His own servants would only approach with signs of submission and respect; not so the all-important matrona! Conscious of her dignity and grave as a judge, she would advance a few steps and wait for him to rise. Then, as he approached on tiptoe and with some timidity, she would turn back the woollen covering from the unexpectedly large bundle on her left arm, and, without a word, show him two little pink faces where he only expected one.

"Yes," she would say, in answer to his exclamations of delight and astonishment, "two has Domine Dio sent to this noble house. Two will be the gifts my lord must bestow on his lady" — this to remind him as well of the double remuneration due to herself. "Pretty? Oh, no, but they are not bad — thanks be! Will it please my lord to send for the priest — the 'semminuccia' is the

FOUNDER OF MONASTICISM

unger — and seems not over-strong! I thank my rd!"

My lord has been feeling in his pouch and has slipped 'o of his few gold pieces into her hand, and, seeing that is inclined to admire the babies, she covers them up d stalks away. Her demeanour has been rhadamanine throughout. There must be no expression of admition, no kissing or fondling of the little creatures before ey are baptised. That would call the attention of the evil to the small unregenerates who are still his prop-ty. When the taint of original sin has been washed ~~say~~ they will be angels of innocence, beautiful cherubs be shown proudly to all and sundry — but not before! So my lord sent for the priest and pondered mean-while on the names he would give the new son and ughter, little dreaming, good man, that fifteen centu-ss later those names would be household words to every i-tholic ear and perpetuated in the colossal literature of nctuaries of holiness and learning. He fixed on Bene-ct for the boy, and Scholastica for the girl, and, so far

I can trace, it was the first time the names had been ed. Benedict means the "Blest" or "Well Spoken"; holastica signifies a lover of learning, or "the Well ught," so we may infer that the lord of Norcia (it is called Nursia then) was a man of more education an most country gentlemen of those rough times, times which history says: "Europe has perhaps never known more calamitous or apparently desperate period than at which reached its climax at this date, the year 480. Infusion, corruption, despair, and death were every-ere; social dismemberment seemed complete. In all e ancient Roman world there did not exist a prince who is not either a pagan, or an Arian, or a Eutychian. In

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

temporal affairs, the political edifice originated by Augustus — that monster assemblage of two hundred millions of human creatures, ‘of whom not a single individual was entitled to call himself free’ — was crumbling into dust under the blows of the Barbarians.” *

Nevertheless, Rome still continued to be looked upon by the surrounding provinces as the centre of education; there was none, at any rate, to be had anywhere else within reach; and thither the lord of Norcia, a descendant of the great family of the Anicia so often mentioned in the Roman chronicles, sent his son to be instructed in philosophy and law — the two subjects which still promised some kind of a career to an intelligent youth. Benedict was scarcely that yet — he was certainly not more than twelve years old, so much of a child that his nurse, Cyrilla, was sent with him to take care of him. Doubtless she found some respectable people with whom to lodge, and indeed one feels some pity for the simple countrywoman, charged with such a heavy responsibility in a strange and, as it must have seemed to her, a very wicked, great city.

So it seemed to the boy, too. He studied, tried to carry out his father’s instructions as faithfully as he could, but all he saw around him inspired him with such a horror of the world and its ways that life became insupportable to him, and he resolved to fly into the wilderness and seek for God. He was only fourteen years old, but he knew with certainty that his life was not to lie in the crowded places. The devout nurse did not oppose his decision; his will was hers, and together they left Rome and took the road towards their old home. I fancy that the boy only then told her that Norcia was not to be

* Montalembert.

FOUNDER OF MONASTICISM

their destination. Before reaching it he would find the place where Heaven willed him to stay. Thus they travelled on, till they came to La Mentorella, one of the strangest spots in all those strange mountains. Its parent is Guadagnolo, the highest standing town in the whole of Romagna, perched on a peak four thousand feet high, and yet shut in on every side with a wall of rock that completely hides it from the outer world. Just below the town a ledge of the precipitous rock juts out abruptly and affords foothold for a Church and hermitage, built here in memory of the conversion of St. Eustace, the mighty hunter. He was called Placidus then, and was a soldier, a noble and a good man, a commander-in-chief much trusted by his Emperor, Trajan, and very upright and charitable in all his dealings with his fellow-men. It has been thought by scientific historians that it is of him that Josephus spoke when recounting the exploits of the Tribune Placidus in the war with the Jews. There are links which seem to connect Placidus with the Octavian family, thus making him a relation of Augustus, and some writers see in the young Placidus, whom his father, Tertullus, confided to Benedict's care, a descendant of the gallant soldier and hunter of Trajan's time. Be all that as it may, we do know that in the days of his pagan prosperity, Placidus, hunting in the mountains, sighted a magnificent stag and pursued it madly through the narrow defiles till it fled up to the summit of an apparently inaccessible rock, and there turned and stood still, gazing down on him. Then Placidus fell on his knees in mortal fear, for between the creature's antlers was a crucifix of fire, from which shot forth rays of such brilliance that they lighted up all the hillside. And from it came a voice saying: "Placidus, why dost thou

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

pursue Me? I am Christ, whom thou hast hitherto served without knowing Me. Dost thou now believe?"

Yes, indeed, Placidus believed, and his whole house with him, and in the after years was privileged to suffer great things for his till then unknown Master. But, for me, I never got much further with his story than that blessed word, "Whom thou hast served without knowing Me." When I read it I think of all the good, brave souls who thus served in past ages and of those who are serving thus now, all over the world, truly and successfully, by the inner light which is imparted to all, of every clime and every faith, so long as they are sincere and have the "single eye" to which Christ promised that "the body shall be full of light."

Placidus, on becoming a Christian, took (or began to use, it may have been his already) the name of Eustace. Either in his time or soon afterwards a Church was built on the site of his vision and the bell-tower of the "Madonna della Vulturella," although its name has been shortened to "La Mentorella," still carries on its summit a gigantic pair of antlers in commemoration of the miracle. Until a few years ago (it may be so even now) the feast of St. Eustace attracted great crowds of pilgrims to the wild and beautiful spot. His day — the day of his martyrdom under Trajan, who, after all his great services could not forgive him for refusing to sacrifice to the gods on the occasion of the Triumph which Eustace had won for him — falls on the 20th of September, that ominous "date which marks one of the blackest steps of history," as Dom Guéranger says — and the martyr's feast has been combined with that of St. Michael on the 29th. Then the lonely rocks of Guadagnolo resound to hymns and litanies, and at night are all lit up with bon-

FOUNDER OF MONASTICISM

fires, one to every little group of pilgrims, who make a point of passing the night there, each family sleeping round its own well-stacked fire. For the autumn nights are keen among those wild precipices, with two cold mountain streams, the Girano and the Siciliano, roaring along their deep beds in the impenetrable darkness below; and also the crags used to be the haunts of naughty brigands who might well covet the gold chains and silver buttons, the rich cloth and lace of the peasants' costumes. So some of the men kept watch, with their old-fashioned muzzle-loaders across their knees, while their rosaries slipped through their fingers — and the Blessed Madonna and St. Eustachio were pleased with their faith and kept the robbers away, for never yet has the pilgrimage been disturbed by those sons of Belial.

It was to La Mentorella that Benedict came, in the year 494, and there he remained for a while, praying to be delivered from the snares of the world. And the faithful Cyrilla staid with him and, their little store of money being exhausted, begged food from the good people round about, for herself and him. For she had not the courage to send and ask for money at home, now that the boy had broken away from teachers and parents to follow the higher call. And the neighbours gave gladly, and lent her utensils to cook with. One day she was grinding meal in a little sieve (a stone bowl pierced with holes). To her dismay she let it drop and it shivered in pieces at her feet. What should she say to the lender? Hearing her lamentations, Benedict came to see what was the matter. He picked up the broken pieces and at once they welded themselves together in his hands, and he gave her back the sieve, whole. Her delight got the better of her prudence, or else some one

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

witnessed the miracle, for immediately the people cried out that they had a Saint in their midst, and they hung the stone bowl up in the Church as a sacred thing.

Their laudations horrified Benedict, and he ran away, alone this time, to find a place where no such temptations could assault his humility. At last he came to a solitary ravine with steep rocky walls through which rushed a turbulent little river, which four hundred years earlier had served Nero unwillingly, being dammed up and made to spread out into pleasure lakes for his gardens a little further on. All was deserted now, and Benedict, being an active, agile boy, crept along the face of the cliff and found a cave, so deep that the light of day never penetrated beyond the entrance; and here he remained, sure of the food his soul needed, solitary communion with God—and royally careless about sustenance for his body. But a kindred heart found him out. Lower down on the course of the Anio, a company of monks had established themselves on the ruins of Nero's villa. There were many such communities then, living apart from the world to pray and do works of charity and penance, under no fixed rule, and therefore insufficiently organised, but many of them leading very holy lives all the same.

One of these monks of Sub Laqueum (as the place was called from the artificial lakes), Romanus by name, found out Benedict's hiding-place and took it upon himself to provide him with food. He told none of his companions about the ardent young recluse, but every day he cut his one loaf of bread in two, and, going to the edge of the cliff, he let down the half loaf on a string, to which he had attached a little bell so that Benedict should know when to come to the mouth of the cave and reach out to catch the bread. Romanus had given him a hair shirt

FOUNDER OF MONASTICISM

and a monastic habit made of skins. He slept on the bare ground and waged constant war on all the impulses of the flesh. That rebelled, fiercely. Many a temptation assailed him. The remembered beauty of one woman in Rome continually haunted him and very nearly dragged him forth from his cave to go and find her; but when that thought came to him, he pulled off his fur robe and rolled his young body in a clump of thorns that grew on the platform of his cave, till it was all one bleeding wound, and his soul regained the mastery.

Seven centuries afterwards St. Francis came from Assisi to visit the spot. He knelt there long and shed many tears over the thicket of thorns. Then he planted two rose trees there, and the thorns gave place to roses that have bloomed for eight hundred summers, and were blooming when I saw them, with never a thorn on their stems. But every leaf of their foliage has a little white line zigzagging across it — to mark the flight of the defeated Serpent from St. Benedict's Eden. There is a pretty story that tells how, after nearly three years, the hermit's retreat was discovered. Sometimes the Devil, in sheer spite (or maybe the chafing points of rock on which Romanus was letting down the bread), would cut the string and then, as Romanus could not come back till the next day, poor young Benedict, his whole supply for twenty-four hours whirled away into the river below, would grow faint and hungry before his benefactor could reach him again.

The Devil is always rampantly busy at holy seasons — it enrages him to see everybody trying to be good, and when Benedict had held out against him for three solid years, he selected Easter Sunday for one of these wicked tricks. Romanus' string snapped, the loaf plunged into

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

the river, and Benedict, always blessing God, resigned himself and went on with his prayers. The pangs of hunger made themselves felt with painful persistence, but he tried to take no notice of them. Not so his kind Creator. In His love for this faithful child He spoke to a good parish priest who was sitting down to his Easter dinner at that moment with a glad heart: "How canst thou enjoy these luxuries whilst a servant of God is pining for food?"

The good priest sprang up, gathered together all that he could carry, and, leaving his own dinner untouched, started out to find the suffering recluse. He knew not his name or his dwelling, but angels guided his steps and helped him to reach the inaccessible cave. There, instead of some aged penitent, he found a tall boy, with beautiful serious eyes, and lithe and strong though his body, clothed in tattered skins, was terribly thin.

Benedict was as much surprised as his visitor. The latter spread the good things before him and bade him eat.

"Nay, friend," said Benedict, "thou bringest meat, eggs!— How can I partake of such luxurious food in this season? It is Lent."

"Lent!" replied the priest. "No, indeed, my son! Lent is over. This is Easter Sunday!"

Then the boy fell to, rejoicing. He had lost count of the day in his solitude.

The priest stayed some time with him and questioned him of his way of life, and Benedict answered in all humility; and the visitor went away convinced of the truth proclaimed by the mysterious voice when it called him a servant of God.

Now some of the shepherds of that country — doubt-

FOUNDER OF MONASTICISM

less in seeking for some strayed kid of the goats — had caught sight of Benedict in his dark cave, and his matted hair and robe of skins had so terrified them that they fled, thinking they had seen a strange wild beast. Now their pastor told them about him, and the poor people began to come to him to ask for his prayers. And those who felt called to a higher life gathered themselves to him for guidance, and the fame of his sanctity and the miracles he wrought went abroad so that certain monks of Vico Varo begged him to come and rule over them. He consented at last and came, but when they realised that he meant to enforce a strict rule instead of letting them follow their own varying inclinations, their admiration — it had never been love — turned to hatred. Satan entered in amongst them, and they resolved to poison him. When the fatal cup was handed to Benedict, he took it without a word — and made the sign of the Cross over it. It was shivered to fragments on the instant. Then he left these false brethren and returned to his grotto, but never more to his solitude. Many came to him, some praying that he would guide their steps in religion, some to confide to him their sons to educate. This multitude could not be housed in the clefts of the rock, so he built twelve monasteries at Sub Laqueum, on the ruins of Nero's villa, and placed in each twelve monks, who bound themselves to live under certain plain and simple rules — much prayer, much labour, fasting and penance; active charity, life-long chastity, and finally poverty, for no individual might own property of any kind. Thus began the monastic life of the West. Up to Benedict's time, as I have said, the religious life was indeed led by many devout persons, but also by many who lacked true devotion and brought the calling into

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

some disrepute. The Founder *par excellence* appeared, and immediately it took on the character by which we recognise it now.

Its deepest and strongest foundation was in its humility. In Benedict nature had been wholly subdued; his self-abasement was complete. No vision of the future had been granted him as yet, no breath of prophecy had whispered that in the years to come thirty thousand monasteries in Europe would be called by his name.

Meanwhile his twelve little houses at Sub Laqucum — our Subiaco — prospered exceedingly, and the numbers of his subjects increased daily. The times were so terrible that men who loved God and His peace were overjoyed to find a spot where war and murder came not and where they could serve God with quiet hearts. There were some such among the Barbarians themselves, and more than one Goth asked to be enrolled among Benedict's spiritual children. All had to work, and the Goths, big honest fellows but dense and unskilful, joined the band of builders and cultivators of the soil. The country was thickly wooded then and there was much felling to be done. One day a Goth, hewing away at a tree, let his axe slip and fall into the lake. Immediately he began to weep and lament, for the implements were few and precious. Benedict came to him, saw what had happened, and made the sign of the Cross over the water. At once the heavy axe floated to the surface, and the Saint drew it forth and gave it back to the poor man, saying: "Ecce, labora, et noli contristare!" — "There, work, and be not afflicted!"

"Symbolical words," says Montalembert, "in which we find an abridgment of the precepts and examples

FOUNDER OF MONASTICISM

lavished by the monastic order on so many generations of conquering races! ‘Ecce, labora! ’ ”

In the miserable and confused condition of public affairs it was difficult for parents of the better classes to procure proper education for their sons, and, as soon as the fame of Benedict’s holiness spread abroad, young boys of noble families were brought to him at Subiaco and confided to his care, in the hope that they, too, would devote themselves to the service of God. Two of these, Placidus and Maurus, were especially dear to him and were destined to become in a special manner his disciples and helpers. Placidus, the younger of the two, was the son of Tertullus, the feudal lord of Subiaco and of many other towns, and a great benefactor to the infant community. But Benedict would allow no distinctions of rank to interfere with the training in obedience and humility which is the only sure foundation for the religious life, and the two young patricians had to perform their share of menial labour like all the rest.

One day Placidus had been sent to fetch water from the lake, and as he stooped to lift out his heavy pitcher he lost his balance and fell into the water, which at that spot formed a dangerous whirlpool. St. Benedict witnessed the accident and, running to Maurus, who stood horrified beside him, said, “Go, my son, and save thy companion.”

Without an instant’s hesitation Maurus walked across the water with a step as firm as if it had been dry land, drew the drowning boy out of the whirlpool, and set him safely on the bank. St. Gregory, in his life of St. Benedict, says: “To what shall I attribute so great a miracle? To the virtue of the obedience, or to that of the commandment?”

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

“To both,” says Bossuet. “The obedience had grace to accomplish the command, and the command had grace to give efficacy to the obedience.”

St. Gregory gives us a beautiful picture of St. Benedict’s loving training of these two predestined souls. He kept them always near him, and would walk along the woody banks of the Anio leaning on Maurus and leading Placidus by the hand, discoursing so wisely and yet so clearly that the appeal to the more mature intelligence of the one was as convincing as to the child-like mind of the other. They witnessed his many miracles, trembled at the punishments that fell on some unfaithful members of the community, and stored up all his words in their hearts — Placidus to be the Apostle of Sicily and the first martyr of the order, Maurus to become the founder of the religious life in France, where he died at the age of seventy after having, as the Breviary puts it, “seen already more than one hundred of his spiritual children precede him to Heaven.”

Those first years at Subiaco were very happy and consoling ones for St. Benedict, but wicked men, some envious of his fame, some the open enemies of all virtue, tried by all means in their power to injure him and corrupt his followers. He took no notice of their calumnies, was unmoved by the attempt of one wretch to poison him; as long as he only was attacked, he went calmly on his way. But when the conspirators sent a crowd of abandoned women to invade the garden where the monks were working, he felt the time had come when he should depart and draw the attacks away from his beloved disciples. So, having set all things in order and adjured the mountain community to be faithful to its vows, he travelled southwards, surely with a heavy heart, and did not pause

FOUNDER OF MONASTICISM

till he had put nearly a hundred miles between himself and his beloved retreat at Subiaco.

About eighty-five miles from Rome, where the ever-capricious Apeninnes sink to a rounded plain and rise in its centre in a natural fortress of rock, there stood, in Roman times, the little town of Cassinum, once the home of Varrus, whom Cicero called “sanctissimus et integer-rimus,” one of those who served God without knowing Him. The place was in ruins when St. Benedict reached it, but he cared nothing for that; what arrested him was the sight of the poor country people climbing the hill to sacrifice to Apollo in the temple on the summit. Pagans yet! He stayed to teach them Christianity, and very soon the temple and grove of Apollo gave place to a Church and monastery — the most famous in the world, the monastery of Monte Cassino.

St. Benedict must have possessed even more than the Saint's usual gift of divine magnetism, for wherever he went eager disciples sprang up around him — many faithful, some few less so, but all irresistibly attracted to the man himself. As it had been at Subiaco, so it was here. Very quickly he converted the poor people of the district, signs and wonders too many to recount “confirming the word,” and his inexhaustible charity making the harried peasants feel that they had found a father, a doctor, a protector, in the benignly gentle monk. The great heart that was utterly empty of self felt for all their sorrows and hardships; the eyes that, as St. Gregory tells us, had already been opened to the vision of the Godhead, saw, as mortals do not see, into the hearts of men, and showed events taking place hundreds of miles away as clearly as those close by, so that when his monks returned from the missions on which he sent them it was he who told

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

them all they had said and done and thought on the way. He seems to have understood that God would spare him further wandering, and accepted Monte Cassino as the cradle of the order he was called to found. Here he composed the Rule which became the model of all succeeding orders, and in its simple completeness contains the essence and ideal of the religious life. That, according to St. Benedict, must include prayer and praise and penance, labour, and unbounded charity, but it does not consist in them. They are its garment, its inevitable expression, so to speak, but the life is the life of the heart in constant union with God. He was opposed to all undue extremes in outward observances, though inflexible as to the keeping of the Rule. "Let this," he said, "be arduous enough to give the strong something to strive for, but not so hard as to discourage the weak!"

He worked at Monte Cassino as if for eternity, yet it was revealed to him that forty years after his death the Lombards would destroy the convent and disperse the monks. It puzzles one to understand that perfect trust and obedience. The knowledge saddened him, but it never made him desist from his labours, so splendidly justified by after events. "I have obtained from the Lord this much," he told the frightened disciples, "when the Barbarian comes he will take things, not lives — *res, non animas.*" But other Barbarians were overrunning the country, left now to its fate by its supine and helpless rulers in Constantinople. The Goths were everywhere; many indeed became devout followers of Benedict, but their Arian brethren pillaged and persecuted, burnt and ravaged, unchecked, and terribly did the people suffer. St. Benedict, who foresaw the great destinies of these

FOUNDER OF MONASTICISM

Northern races when they should become enlightened, stood between the conquerors and the conquered as judge and protector, and both in the end always bowed to his ruling.

There is a wonderful story that I must set down, because it shows his power over nature, both animate and inanimate things. To me it seems more impressive than all his other miracles, even those of restoring the dead to life. A particularly fierce Goth robber, named Galla, "traversed the country panting with rage and cupidity, and made a sport of slaying the priests and monks who fell under his power, and spoiling and torturing the people to extort from them the little they had remaining. An unfortunate peasant, exhausted by the torments inflicted upon him by the pitiless Goth, conceived the idea of bringing them to an end by declaring that he had confided all that he had to the keeping of Benedict, a servant of God, upon which Galla stopped the torture of the peasant, but, binding his arms with ropes and thrusting him in front of his own horse, ordered him to go before and show the way to the house of this Benedict who had defrauded him of his expected prey. Both thus pursued the way to Monte Cassino, the peasant on foot, with his hands tied behind his back, urged on by the blows and taunts of the Goth, who followed on horseback.

"When they reached the summit of the mountain, they perceived the Abbot, seated alone, reading at the door of his monastery. 'Behold,' said the prisoner, 'there is the Father Benedict of whom I told thee.'

"Then the Goth shouted furiously to the monk: 'Rise up, rise up, and restore quickly what thou hast received from this peasant!' The man of God raised his eyes

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

from his book and, without speaking, slowly turned his gaze first on the Barbarian on horseback, and then upon the husbandman bound and bowed down by his cords. Under the light of that powerful gaze the cords which tied his poor arms loosed of themselves, and the innocent victim stood erect and free, while the ferocious Galla, falling on the ground, trembling and beside himself, remained at the feet of Benedict, begging the Saint to pray for him. Benedict called his brethren and directed them to carry the fainting Barbarian into the monastery and give him some blessed bread. And when he had come to himself the Abbot represented to him the injustice and cruelty of his conduct, and exhorted him to change it for the future. The Goth was completely subdued." *

The picture of the holy abbot sitting and reading in the doorway is one which recurs several times in his history, and it is good to know that the doorway is one of the very few fragments remaining of Benedict's home at Monte Cassino. It still contains, I believe, an inscription to that effect. The Lombard destruction left this archway standing, and also the little tower whence Benedict's bell called the monks to work and prayer. One loves even to touch the stones that knew his presence at Monte Cassino. Subiaco is full of him indeed, but it was at Monte Cassino that his greatest work was done; over its foreseen destruction he wept bitterly and it was there that he died.

A yet more notable encounter than the one with Galla took place at the arched doorway, in 542, one year before Benedict's death. Totila, the Ostrogoth, swept down through Italy to retrieve the losses and defeats inflicted on his predecessor by Belisarius. It was a triumphal

* Montalembert.

FOUNDER OF MONASTICISM

progress. He was on his way to Naples when the whim took him to see for himself the venerated prophet of the holy mountain. But first he wished to test the prophet's powers. So he caused the captain of his guard to be dressed in all his own royal robes, down to the famous purple boots, gave him three noble counts for his attendants and a great escort of soldiers, and told him to go and pass himself off on Benedict as the real Totila. We are not informed how the unlucky captain regarded his mission — probably with fear and reluctance — but it failed dismally. As he approached the monastery St. Benedict perceived him from afar and called out: "My son, put off the dress you wear! It is not yours."

The captain, terrified, threw himself on the ground. Then re-mounting, he and his whole company turned round and galloped away at full speed to tell Totila that it was useless to attempt to deceive the man of God. And Totila understood, and came himself, very humbly, and saw the Abbot sitting as usual in the doorway, reading a holy book. The conqueror was afraid. He threw himself face downward on the sward and dared not approach. Three times Benedict bade him rise — still he lay prone. Then the Saint left his seat and came and raised Totila up and led him to the house and talked long and earnestly with him, reproving him for the wrong he had done and showing him that he must treat his conquered subjects kindly and justly. Also, St. Benedict, mercifully moved thereto by the sincerity of the Barbarian, told him what lay in store for him: "You shall enter Rome; you shall cross the sea; nine years you shall reign, and in the tenth you shall die."

And Totila repented of his many evil deeds and begged the seer to pray for him, and went back to his camp

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

a changed man. Thenceforth he protected the weak, restrained his followers, and showed himself so mild and wise that the delighted Neapolitans, who had been expecting a repetition of the awful massacres ordered by Belisarius, said that Totila treated them as if they were his own children. From that time the tenth year was ever before his eyes, and when it came he died, contrite and resigned.

One gleam from home was shed on St. Benedict at Monte Cassino. His sister Scholastica had long since followed his example and given herself to God. It was not permitted to women to take the final vows before the age of forty, but that did not prevent them from preparing for the irrevocable dedication by living together in religious communities, under a fixed rule, from their early youth, when they were so inclined. Such a life Scholastica had led, somewhere in the solitudes of the Sabines — perhaps in her own home at Norcia; but she came at last to Monte Cassino and built a convent there for herself and her companions, so as to be near the brother she loved. Only once a year did they meet, and then they spent the day together in a hut on the side of Benedict's mountain, he coming down with a few of the brethren, and she accompanied by some of the nuns. All their discourse was of holy things and much they spoke of the longed-for joys of Heaven.

Now, in the year 543, they had thus passed the day together and evening was drawing on. St. Benedict rose, saying that he and his companions must return to the monastery, but Scholastica, for the first time in all those years, begged him to remain with her till the morning. The Saint was horrified. "Do you not know, my sister," he exclaimed, "that the Rule forbids a monk to pass the

FOUNDER OF MONASTICISM

night out of the monastery? How can you ask me to do such a thing?"

Scholastica did not reply. She bowed her head on her hands on the table that had served for their repast and wept, praying to God that her brother might stay, for she knew that they were to meet no more in this world. She wept so heartbrokenly that her tears flooded the table and made little rivers on the ground. It was a mild February evening, and the sun had sunk away from a calm and cloudless sky. But suddenly a fearful tempest arose, the thunder roared, the rain came down in torrents, the lightning seared the heavens from side to side.

"Sister, what have you done?" St. Benedict exclaimed, fearing that the storm was a manifestation of the Divine displeasure.

Scholastica raised her head and smiled at him through her tears. "God has granted what you refused," she said. "Go back to the monastery now, brother, if you can!"

But there was no going back through that tempest, and St. Benedict, perceiving that the Lord was on Scholastica's side, stayed with her till morning, and they had great sweetness of holy converse all night long. And when the sun rose, Scholastica asked for his blessing and said farewell for the last time, and she and her nuns went down the hill to their own convent, looking back many times, I think, to that other one on the hill. And three days later she died, and her brother saw her soul mount to Heaven under the appearance of a spotless dove, and he called his monks and said to them, with great rejoicing: "My sister is with God. Go and bring her body hither that we may bury it with honour."

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

Which they did, and Benedict made her a grave at the foot of the altar in his Church.

Now he knew that his own end was approaching, and he disposed all things rightly, and mightily exhorted his brethren to persevere and to be faithful to their Rule. And he more than ever afflicted his body with penance and abounded in charity to the poor. And thirty-four days after Scholastica had departed, a great fever seized him, so that he had no strength and suffered much. But he never ceased from praying and bade all his monks pray that God would have mercy on his soul. On the sixth day of the fever he bade them carry him into the Church, where he had already caused his sister's grave to be opened to receive him. There, on the edge of the grave, supported by his disciples, he received the Holy Viaticum, and then bade them lift him to his feet. He stretched out his arms, praised God once more for all His goodness, and died — *standing*, like the gallant warrior he was!

They buried him beside Scholastica. Two of his monks, whom he had sent forth on a mission, were very far away from Monte Cassino when they saw, in the dead of night, a vast number of the stars of heaven run together to form a great bridge of light towards the east. A voice spoke to them, saying, “By this road, Benedict, the beloved of God, has ascended to Heaven.”

CHAPTER III

ST. GREGORY THE GREAT

Birth and Lineage of St. Gregory—Path from the World to the Cloister—Prayer, Study, and Charity—His Cat—A Prophecy—A Cardinal Deacon—Mission to Constantinople—Eutyches' Heresy—Rome in Pestilence—Gregory Elected Pope—His Unbelievable Accomplishments—His Life as Pope—Championship of the Oppressed—Bond with English-speaking People—The Great Procession During the Pestilence—Gregory's Successors.

THREE years before St. Benedict and his sister Scholastica passed away, there was born, in a palace on the Cœlian Hill, a child who was christened Gregory, a name which signified "Vigilant." His lineage was exceedingly illustrious, his parents belonging to the great old Gens Anicia, a family of nobles which had been respected and honoured ever since the days of the Republic, and in which, to use the words of a chronicler of Gregory's time, "the men seemed all to have been born Consuls, and the women Saints."

Gregory's mother was St. Silvia, and I have seen the garden on the quiet Cœlian Hill where as a child he ran about at her side, asking a thousand questions, as clever children will, while she tended her flowers and gathered healing herbs — the "basilica" and "Madrecara" and "erba della Madonna" still dear to Roman apothecaries — to make into medicines for the sick poor who thronged her charitable doors. Mothers see a long way, and, while Gregory's father was planning a great career in the world for his only son, Silvia was praying that God would keep him pure, and make him great in His sight.

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

And her prayers prevailed, as mothers' prayers generally do, and, though she had to wait a little, she lived to see their fulfilment.

As the boy grew up he threw himself heart and soul into his father's plans; he studied hard, and his naturally brilliant gifts brought him much distinction. He rejoiced in all the pleasant things that birth and wealth had bestowed on him—good looks, popularity, rich garments, and sparkling jewels—and no doubt was immensely pleased and flattered when, being still quite young, he was made Proctor of Rome. That charge, however, was a grave one at the time, as the Lombards, the most cruel and brutal of all the savage tribes that had threatened the Eternal City, chose the period of Gregory's proctorship to descend upon her and make her feel the weight of their heavy hand. There were religious troubles, too, and Gregory, who through all his busy official life in the world was an ardent Christian, was deeply exercised and distressed by them. But the world was only to claim him for a little while, in his early manhood. Then he was withdrawn from it to be prepared, through many long years of prayer and penance and study, to step forth towards the end of his life as its rescuer and ruler. Little by little the inner call came, faint at first, sometimes resisted, but ever stronger, till Gregory understood and obeyed.

His heart had gone out at once to the Benedictine monks, when, on the destruction of Monte Cassino by the Lombards, they had sought refuge in Rome. Some of them became his most intimate friends and their encouragement smoothed his path from the world to the cloister. From the moment when he recognised and embraced his vocation, all hesitation left him. He sold all

ST. GREGORY THE GREAT

his goods, distributed the larger part to the poor, and, as if to atone for what the Lombards had destroyed, built and endowed six new monasteries, placing twelve Benedictines in each, in Sicily. That done, he converted his home on the Cœlian into a seventh, where he gathered another community about him, of the same learned Order. His father was dead, and his mother, on becoming a widow, had already built a convent close by, where she had taken the veil herself.

Gregory now devoted himself to three things — prayer, study, and charity. For his own use — he was quickly elected abbot of the monastery — he reserved a small cell, where he could enjoy the solitude he now so greatly desired, but — a delightfully human touch! — he could not get on without his favourite cat, and one can see him, in imagination, pausing from his writing to smooth her velvety head when she sprang upon the table and rubbed it against his cheek! I had a little cat once who would sit motionless on a chair beside me all night while I was writing, but the instant I laid down the pen she was on my lap or my shoulder, talking in her own way, most intelligently and cheerfully; so I was mightily pleased when I read about St. Gregory's cat!

The Benedictine Rule provided for all hospitality to strangers and the poor, but at the same time directed that the monks themselves were not to be disturbed from prayer and study. St. Gregory, however, seems to have received all who wished to see him, perhaps as an exercise of patience. Now there was a poor ship-wrecked sailor who seemed inclined to abuse the privilege. He came again and again, and was never turned away, but on the occasion of what proved to be his last visit Gregory had not a single thing left to give him. He was

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

looking round his rough cell in perplexity, when a messenger appeared bringing the silver basin full of porridge, which was the only food he allowed himself and which his mother sent him every day! Here was what was needed! The next moment the needy sailor man was walking away with the hot porridge and the silver porringer. What St. Silvia said when she heard of the incident has not been recorded — but Gregory never gave the matter another thought until one day, long after, when the importunate sailor appeared to him in his true character, that of an Angel of light, and told him that God had taken note of his charity and — an alarming prophecy for the Saint — that he would be elected Pope and do great things for the Church.

All he asked was to be left quiet in his monastery, where he was putting his whole heart into living the life of a model monk. In his ardour against himself, he carried his penances too far and fasted so rigorously that he came near to dying — an imprudence for which he paid ever after in broken health and in being debarred from fasting at all. He complains pitifully of having to “drag about such a big body with so little strength,” but this was the least of the trials that awaited him.

In the year 577, when Gregory was about thirty-seven years of age, the reigning Pope, Benedict I, sent for him and insisted upon making him one of the Cardinal Deacons to whom was entrusted the jurisdiction of the seven “Regions” into which the city was divided. Gregory protested, but had to take on the charge, and from that time forward he belonged less to himself than to others. He was too necessary and valuable to be spared. The next year, Pope Benedict being dead, his successor, Pelagius II, decided to send Gregory on a very difficult

ST. GREGORY THE GREAT

and important mission to the Emperor Tiberius Constantinus at Constantinople, where trouble of all kinds seemed to be brewing. Although Gregory bewails this "thrusting out from port into the storm," one cannot but feel how the alert fighting spirit in the man leaps to the call. The born leader may persuade himself that he is happiest in the seclusion he thinks good for his soul, but when the call to arms comes every repressed fibre of his being wakes and cries for action.

When Gregory, taking with him several of his monks, sailed away from Italy, he little dreamed that years were to pass before he should return. On his arrival in Constantinople, the first matter to claim his attention was the ugly new heresy started by Eutyches, who had drawn the Emperor and many others into the path of error by declaring that there was to be no resurrection of the flesh. Gregory was politely received by the Emperor, and instantly requested the latter to call a conference in which the dogma should be discussed. Tiberius consented, and there followed the famous conference in which Gregory's fiery eloquence and invincible logic quashed the heresy at once. When he had finished speaking, the Emperor commanded that a fire should be lighted, and with his own hands and in the presence of a vast concourse burnt the book which Eutyches had written to propound the heresy, and declared himself now and for ever the faithful son of the Church. Eutyches, touched to the heart by Gregory's arguments, accepted defeat and rebuke as but small punishment for his fault, and when he was dying, soon afterwards, pulled up the skin of one poor emaciated hand with the fingers of the other and cried to those around him, "I confess that in this flesh we shall rise from the dead!" Gregory proved

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

a successful ambassador in every way. The relations between the Church and the imperial court had been badly interrupted by the Lombard invasion, but he welded them smoothly and firmly together. Tiberius died while Gregory was in Constantinople, and his successor, Maurice, was badly disposed to the Church. Gregory brought him to a better mind and obliged him to rescind an edict he had just issued forbidding any member of the army to embrace the monastic life.

At last, after six years of what must have been the most anxious work, requiring all that the great man had of wisdom and firmness and tact, he returned to Italy — to find his beloved Rome in terrible distress from a visitation of the pestilence. Gregory at once devoted himself to the care of the sick and dying, and one can fancy how the poor people's eyes lighted up when he appeared among them again. Then the good Pope Pelagius succumbed to the disease, and at once all eyes turned to Gregory, who was unanimously elected as his successor.

Gregory was honestly horrified. He refused, he pleaded, he argued, but no one would listen to him. Then he fled. Disguised as a peasant, he slipped away and hid himself in a secret cave in the hills, entreating the Lord to protect him from the awful honour which his fellow-citizens wished to thrust upon him. They meanwhile were searching for him in every direction, and would have failed in their quest had not Heaven put itself visibly on their side. From very far off they beheld a tall pillar of light resting before the fugitive's cave — they rushed to it, dragged him forth, and made him Pope. Seeing that his fellow-citizens would not listen to him, he wrote to the Emperor Maurice, begging him not to confirm the election, but the Romans intercepted the let-

ST. GREGORY THE GREAT

ter; the Emperor was informed of the election in the usual way and was only too glad to give it the imperial sanction, still required then from Constantinople. For once the "Vox Populi" had proved itself what it never is, nowadays, the "Vox Dei," and for fourteen years Gregory reigned, in virtue and wisdom and glory, for the everlasting good of the people of God. Every gift that Heaven had bestowed upon him vindicated its unerring designs. He accomplished in those fourteen years so many wonderful things that cold sense almost refuses its adherence to the visible facts. His colossal labours for the Church gave us the Gregorian chant, the Sacramentary of the missal, and the Breviary; his correspondence, so vast that, like Napoleon and Julius Cæsar, he is supposed to have dictated to several secretaries at once, embraces every point that required treating of at home and abroad. His sermons, day after day, instructed the ignorant in the plain truths of salvation, while they no less amazed and illuminated the minds of the most learned; and through it all his soul was never disturbed from the calm heights of union with God, his heart never closed to a single cry from the suffering and the weary. The much abbreviated list of "some of his labours," as the Breviary puts it, would stagger the grasp of any modern scholar or ruler. In a few lines he is shown to us reëstablishing the Catholic Faith in many places where it had suffered, repressing the Donatists in Africa, the Arians in Spain, expelling the Agnostics from Alexandria, and refusing the "Pallium" (the sign of pontifical investiture) to Syagrius, the Bishop-elect of Autun, until he had turned the "heretic Neophytes" *

* This term requires explanation. The two great sins of the Church in Gaul were first Simony, and secondly, the practice of admitting

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

out of Gaul; quelling the audacity of John, the Patriarch of Constantinople, who had dared to call himself the "Head of the Universal Church," and so on, preaching, writing, praying, and through it all suffering constantly and acutely.

There is a legend to the effect that all these pains and sicknesses had been voluntarily accepted in order to deliver a certain soul from Purgatory. The legend is only a legend, unsupported by the authority of the Church — but it would have been just like St. Gregory to do it!

In every public or private trouble or upheaval, as well as in every effort to reorganise and restore, his name, his presence is dominant. After becoming Pope, he lived chiefly at the Lateran palace, then the official Papal residence, and they still keep there the narrow pallet that served him for a bed, and — mark this, ye modern schoolboys! — the little rod which he had to use to keep his dark-eyed, rampageous young choristers in order!

The men who can govern others with the most unerring wisdom are often entirely mistaken in their appreciation of themselves. Only the other day the local and most successful Superior of a great missionary order in America was bewailing his fate to me. "I told the Bishop he was making a dreadful mistake in making me the Rector," he declared. "It is not my work — I was not intended to govern and lead! I am a born freelance — I want to travel all over the country seeking out the lost souls. I am no good at anything else!"

But the Bishop knew better; and so it was with the great crowd of clergy and laity who designated Gregory for the Papacy. What he accomplished during his

unprepared laymen to Holy Orders and often to the Episcopate. This last vice Gregory called "The heresy of Neophytes."

ST. GREGORY THE GREAT

pontificate has been well summed up by Montalembert: "Gregory, who alone amongst men has received, by universal consent, the double surname of Saint and Great, will be an everlasting honour to the Benedictine order, as to the Papacy. By his genius, but especially by the charm and ascendancy of his virtue, he was destined to organise the temporal power of the Popes, to develop and regulate their spiritual sovereignty, to found their paternal supremacy over the new-born crowns and races which were to become the great nations of the future, and to be called France, Spain, and England. It was he, indeed, who inaugurated the middle ages, modern society, and Christian civilisation." The task he undertook was a gigantic one, for on the one side he had to contend with the exactions and oppressions of the corrupt and decrepit Byzantine Emperors who were still the nominal rulers of Rome and his own secular masters; on the other, with the great new forces let loose on the world in the increasing vigour and supremacy of the Lombards and other northern nations, more than half barbarous still, but, as Gregory clearly perceived, possessed of an intelligence and vitality which only required training and instruction to grow into great, new polities which would replace the already dead Roman Empire.

To appreciate his labours one would have to read that colossal correspondence which has fortunately been preserved entire. Besides the mighty matters of Church and Empire which it sets forth, there shows all through the most tender and minute care for the lower and therefore unprotected classes, as well as for individual souls. Slavery, in every form, excited Gregory's generous indignation, and his most earnest efforts were devoted to restoring slaves to the rank of human beings. The

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

peasants on the great estates were serfs — practically slaves. He decreed that their marriages should be inviolable, their property their own, their wills valid; that wherever possible the Church revenues should be devoted to buying the freedom of slaves and that never, on any plea, should Christians be sold to Jews or pagans. At the same time he enacted that neither Jews nor pagans should be baptised by force, and commanded that the synagogues of the Jews should be restored to them and that they should be allowed freedom of worship. Always humble and diffident about asking anything for himself, it is amusing to find him severely reprimanding a Bishop who had authorised or permitted extortionate exactions to be practised against an obscure farmer in Sardinia, and at the same time writing meekly to the overseer of some ecclesiastical property in Sicily — a stud farm where were kept four hundred stallions: " You have sent me one bad horse and four asses. I cannot ride the horse, because it is bad, nor the asses, because they are asses. If you would assist to sustain me, send me something that I can use ! "

But, after all, the special bond between St. Gregory and English-speaking peoples lies in the memorable act by which England was evangelised, after the Faith first planted there had been annihilated by the pagan Barbarians, Saxons, Angles, Scandinavians, to whom she fell an easy prey when Rome withdrew its protecting legions and abandoned her to her fate.

It is rather sweet to know that it was the fair, innocent beauty of a group of English children, standing, dazed and frightened, in the market to be sold, that first touched his heart to such warm pity for their country. He was then living as the abbot of the community he had founded

ST. GREGORY THE GREAT

on the Cœlian Hill, and enough has been said to show how happy he was in his quiet life there.

It must have been some unusual necessity which took him far down into the town on a certain day and through the noisy, crowded slave market. But on seeing the children, with their blue eyes full of tears and their long golden hair shining in the sun, everything else was forgotten; he stopped abruptly to ask who they were.

“Angles, from the isle of Britain,” was the answer, given indifferently enough. The keeper knew that the big, dark-faced monk was not a slave-buyer.

“Angles! They are born to be angels!” cried Gregory, and straightway he flew to the Pope and besought permission to go with some of his monks to Britain to preach the Gospel. The Pope, taken by surprise, consented, and before he had time to think over the matter Gregory, with his volunteers, had put three days of travelling between himself and Rome. Then the news leaked out, and the people rose like one man and rushed to the Pope, who was on his way to St. Peter’s, and, arresting his progress, burst into indignant cries: “You have offended St. Peter! You have ruined Rome in allowing Gregory to leave us!”

Pelagius saw his mistake and sent messengers in all haste to call Gregory back. Of course he obeyed; he never forgot England, but it was only in the sixth year of his own pontificate (596) that he could carry out his design, and then he could not himself take part in the expedition. He found a noble substitute in St. Augustine, and it must have been with a glad heart that he sent him forth, and gave him and his forty Benedictines the final blessing, as they knelt (so we are told) on the grassy stretch below the steps of Gregory’s own convent on the

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

Cœlian Hill. The grass grows there still; still the green trees shadow the enclosure called St. Gregory's park, through which one approaches the Church, and still the flowers bloom in Silvia's garden where he played as a little boy. Even modern Rome has been loath to encroach on the place so dear to him who loved Rome so much.

I have often wondered what became of the little English children he saw and, seeing, loved. Surely he rescued them and placed them with kind people to be cared for. His quick notice of them reminds one of our own Pius IX, who could never pass an English child without stopping to bless it, and, while blessing the child, to pray for England, whom Augustine and his companions made "the Isle of Saints" and the "Dowry of Mary." Poor England! she threw her glory to the winds at the command of an adulterous King and his unspeakable daughter, and, now that even the moth-eaten rags of her heresies will no longer hold together, dares to call her crumbling simulacrum of a Church the "Church of Saint Augustine"! *That* never died, in reality; and all honour to those of her children who, through three hundred years of abominable persecution and oppression, kept the Faith, and prepared the way for its splendid renaissance to-day!

One more picture of St. Gregory must close this humble sketch of his great life. As already related, after he had been elected Pope he sent a letter to the Emperor Maurice, imploring him not to confirm the decision of the people. And just then, as if jealous of all the good work that was going forward, the Powers of Evil let loose a terrible outbreak of the pestilence in Rome. They could not touch the spiritual city — Rome

ST. GREGORY THE GREAT

invisible, the Sanctuary of the Faith, but the material one seemed to be delivered into their hands and terrible were its sufferings. Poverty and neglect, and the ruin of ceaseless wars, had made it vulnerable at every point; the pestilence had swept it again and again, but this was the most frightful visitation of all. Gregory and his monks, and many other charitable persons, devoted themselves to the sick and dying; the lazarets and hospitals were crowded — every day with new sufferers as the dead were carried out; but it became impossible to bury the dead fast enough. Neither prayer nor effort seemed of any avail, and dull despair settled on all hearts. Apparently this was to be the end.

Then Gregory instituted the first of those great processions which, in moments of stress, have moved across the pages of history ever since, awing us a little by the whole-hearted faith and trust of our ancestors in the mercy of Heaven. Gregory decreed that all, Clergy and Laity, who could stand on their feet should put on the garments of penitence and follow him through the stricken streets to pray at the Tomb of St. Peter. And all who could obeyed like one man. What a sight that must have been when the Saint, "the strong, dark-faced man of heavy build," led his afflicted people from the "Mother of Churches" at the Lateran Gate down past all the ruined pomp of the Palatine and the Colosseum and the Forum towards the river and the great Basilica of Constantine beyond! How the response of the Major Litanies must have thundered up from all those breaking hearts to the "skies of brass" that hung over Rome! The ever-repeated "Te rogamus, audi nos!" and "Libera nos, Domine" even now bring tears to one's eyes with their almost despairing simplicity; *then* they

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

were the last appeals of a crushed and ruined race for one more chance to repent and atone for its heaped misdeeds. And the chance was granted. As the endless procession moved along towards St. Peter's its leader paused before the Mausoleum of Hadrian, that huge monument of pagan ambition, and raised his eyes and heart in supplication, offering we know not what of his own life and destiny for his people's sins.

Suddenly he stood transfigured. The chanting ceased; all eyes followed Gregory's gaze, all ears were strained to catch the heavenly melody that floated, high and clear, fresh as the song of birds at dawn, over the sorrowing city:

“ *Regina Cœli laetare,
Quia quem meruisti portare,
Resurrexit, sicut dixit!* ”

It was the chant of the Resurrection!

“ *Alleluia, Alleluia!* ” came the sequel in one burst from that great multitude, as the angels' voices grew fainter and were lost in the depths overhead. And then, on hearts bursting now with relief and joy, there fell the awe that mortals feel in the presence of the Heavenly Ones, for there, on the summit of the towering fortress, stood the radiant Archangel — and he was sheathing his flaming sword.

The pestilence was over. Once more God had had mercy on His people. And, since the angels' song was addressed to the Queen of Heaven, we know that it was she whose prayers had stayed the arm that had clung round her neck in Bethlehem.

St. Gregory passed to his reward on the 12th of March, 604, having reigned nearly fourteen years. The mourn-

ST. GREGORY THE GREAT

ing city chose Sabinianus of Volterra to succeed him, but only three years had elapsed when Sabinianus in his turn made place for a Boniface (III), who lived but one year after his election, and then came another Boniface, a Saint, a strong man of the Abruzzi, and in his reign the world found out that, though imperial Rome was indeed dead, the Rome that Gregory and Benedict and their fellow-workers had planted on her grave during that century of apparent eclipse had taken root below and shot out branches above and had become as a mighty tree affording guidance, shelter, and sustenance to the whole Christian world.

Each of the great Popes seems to have had a special mission to fulfil, one that coloured all his acts and sheds its individual lustre on his memory. No doubt or hesitation seems to accompany the acceptance and fulfilment of it. Boniface's mission bade him place the seal of visible Christianity on the city and consecrate it to the Faith for all time. It was Boniface, the fourth of that name, who decreed and carried out the Triumph of which I spoke in a preceding chapter. But it is a big subject and it must have a chapter to itself.

CHAPTER IV

MEMORIES OF THE PANTHEON

The Pantheon—Hadrian's Best Monument—Long Idle—Consecrated as St. Mary of the Martyrs—The Cathedral, the Symbol of the Soul—Its Purification—Continuity of the Church—A Priest's Visit—The Alabaster Square—Procession of the Martyrs' Relics—Giovanni Borgi, the Workman—Italian Guilds—Giovanni's Selflessness—His Rescue of the Forsaken Children—Care of Them—Crusade in Behalf of All the Waifs of Rome—His Work of Love—Giovanni's Successor, Later Pius IX.

If you stand before San Pietro in Montorio and look down from the spot where St. Peter was crucified, you will see, rounding up in the low-lying heart of the city, a dome, white, huge, uncrowned, standing out from the darker buildings round it like an enormous mother-of-pearl shell, softly iridescent, yet, when storm is in the air, taking on a grey and deathlike hue. That is the Pantheon, and thus it has stood, reflecting every mood of the Roman sky, since the days of Hadrian, who became Emperor in the year 117. Hadrian built the magic dome, but it is not his name that stands out in the gigantic lettering on the pediment over the portico. Ninety years before his time Marcus Agrippa, the intimate friend and (for his sins!) the son-in-law of Augustus, erected a magnificent temple close to the Baths which still bear his name in the Campus Martius, the field of which my brother has told the touching story in "Ave, Roma Immortalis." Agrippa must have forgotten to properly propitiate the gods; we moderns should say that he "had no luck," for his gorgeous temple was soon

MEMORIES OF THE PANTHEON

struck by lightning and presented a forlorn appearance when Hadrian, that enthusiastic builder, decided to restore it.

This he did on his usual princely scale; when he had done with it, the Pantheon (properly "Pantheum," all-holy) must indeed have dazzled the eyes of the beholders, for the dome was entirely covered with tiles of gilt bronze that under the rays of the sun made it seem a second sun that had come to rest on earth. The gilt tiles were stripped off in 663 by a greedy little Emperor, Constans II, who took them away to Syracuse, whence the Saracens successfully looted them a few years afterwards. So the thing that looks like mother-of-pearl is really only covered with sheets of lead — but even lead, when the Heavens have looked on it long enough, may become a thing of life and beauty. When Hadrian had finished his building there was nothing left of Agrippa's original one except the portico; but Hadrian, with rare moderation, left the original founder's name on that. The Pantheon, which is called by archæologists "the most perfect pagan monument in Rome," seems to have been, in its beginnings, unfortunate, for only sixty-four years after Hadrian's death it again stood sadly in need of repair, if we may believe the magniloquent inscription left on its front by Septimius Severus and his son Caracalla, when they had carried out their pious designs of further restoration.

But it remains Hadrian's best monument, substantially what he made it, a vast and perfect round under a vast and perfect dome, a place where the winds of Heaven may sweep down from the central opening — thirty feet across — overhead, and circle round the wide well of the interior and rise to the sky again without having en-

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

countered the shock of a single angle on their way. And for more than seventeen hundred and fifty years the rain has fallen and the sun has shone and the stars have looked down on Hadrian's pavement through the great opening, whence worshippers now, like the worshippers in his time, could raise their eyes and thoughts to the vault of Heaven above. But for two hundred years — as if to partly balance the three centuries of persecution which had preceded them — the Pantheon was closed and none were permitted to pray there, two hundred years during which the silence was never broken, and stars and sun and winds had their way in the stupendous, empty fane. It was the Emperor Honorius of inglorious memory who closed and sealed its bronze doors — the same that guard it now, (and perhaps this and a few other such acts, which showed him at heart a sincere believer, should be remembered to his attenuated credit) — preferring to have it abandoned altogether rather than used for the service of idols. And so it stood, a beautiful reproach, from 399 to 609, when our Pope Boniface told the Emperor Phocas that it was a burning shame not to wash it of pagan stains and consecrate it a Church of the Lord.

Phocas — that blood-stained figure who emerges now and then to surprise us by some memorable action — said the Pope was right, and gave him the building to do with it as he liked. And then Boniface carried out the great plan which must have been simmering in his brain for years. The temple, built for the seven deities of the seven planets, was to become the shrine of the bodies of the Saints and be consecrated to the one True God, under the title of "St. Mary of the Martyrs." Under that perfect dome of exactly equal height and diameter

MEMORIES OF THE PANTHEON

(one hundred and forty-two feet) he would finally lay to rest all the sacred remains which were still buried in the Catacombs all round the city. But there was much to do first. The rich architectural disposition of the interior required no alteration beyond the erection of a High Altar; the great window to the sky Boniface would not close; when dust and rubbish were cleared away the material preparations were over, but the tremendous ceremony of purification and consecration had yet to be accomplished. For these the illustrious predecessors of Boniface had been inspired to draw up a ceremonial of such profound meaning and glorious diction as remains matchless in the annals of the Liturgy.

We can only see it now with the eyes of the spirit, but, even while trying to do that, we must not let the magnificence of the external function make us forget that which the Church so lovingly and repeatedly impresses upon us — first, that there is but one Sanctuary *worthy* of the Most High, His Throne and dwelling in the inaccessible light of the Fixed Heaven, round which all universes that the human mind can grasp revolve, like starry spindrift round a living sun; and, secondly, that the home God has built for Himself on earth and loves with the most passionate tenderness is the heart of the Christian, where He will abide for time and eternity if it do not cast Him out. The chief object of ecclesiastical architecture is to symbolise the grandeur of the union between the soul and its Creator; as such, and as the storehouse and dispensary of graces, the banqueting hall where He feeds us with Himself, the arsenal where He arms us for the combat and trains us for His soldiers, where, in His surpassing love and mercy, He deigns to remain in the adorable Eucharist, the consecrated Church

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

is the crown of human production, and rightly do we strain every nerve to make it rich and noble and fair.

When that is done, and all that men can give has been lavished on beautifying and enriching it, it has to be cleansed from every blemish of earthly contact before it can be offered to the service of God. When we wander through the Cathedrals of the world — Westminster Abbey, Strasburg, Notre Dame, Milan — asking ourselves how mere men ever attained to the production of such beauty and grandeur, do we ever stop to think that those towering walls were washed from vault to pavement, within and without, with holy oil, on the day of consecration?

The Cathedral was the symbol of the soul, and every act and prayer of the ceremonial depicted for our fore-fathers — so well instructed in the truths we first take for granted and then forget — the processes by which God confers on us the gift of immortality. On the eve of the great day all left the building, the new doors were closed, no step sounded on the pavement, no voice might break the stillness of the place. It was a dead thing waiting for life, as the soul that is not united to God waits, under its inherited burden of sinfulness, for regeneration.

Outside the precincts a great tent has been erected, and here, all through the night, the Bishop and his assistants have been praying, the prayers of David the great penitent. All night long the penitential psalms have been going up, beseeching the Lord to wash away the sins of His people, His exiles on earth who are waiting without the camp, and entreating Him to take them into grace and bring them to their Father's home. With the first faint light of dawn the prayers cease, the supplicants arise, and the Bishop puts on his vestments, one by one

MEMORIES OF THE PANTHEON

and with a special prayer for each, because he thus figures the Son of God putting on the garment of our humanity. And because Christ, as man, prayed to His Father and ours, the Bishop comes forth from the tent and prostrates himself before the steps of the Church in fervent prayer, with all his clergy kneeling around him.

Now the natural soul is cold and blind, and closed to Grace; so the Church stands, unlighted and with fast closed doors. And because the Spirit of God is all gentleness and mercy, and condescends to most patient stratagems to capture the heart He covets, the Bishop goes three times round the great building, praying and knocking softly at its doors, while the clergy follow him and pray, too, as the angels pray for us. At last the first barrier falls; the doors open, reluctantly as it were. The Bishop crosses the threshold saying, "Peace eternal to this House, in the Name of the Eternal." The procession passes within, the shadows swallowing up the gold and crimson of the vestments that had been sparkling in the sun. A strange sight the empty Church presents now. On the pavement two broad paths of ashes traverse its entire length and breadth, in the form of a Greek Cross. The assistants stand in silent groups while the Bishop, slowly moving down from the apse to the entrance, and then across from one transept to the other, traces in the ashes the Latin and Greek alphabets, with his crozier. Why? Because the first need of the soul is instruction. "How shall they know except they first be taught?" And, since God will not take possession of a soul without its own concurrence and consent, it must know Him before it receives Him.

Knowledge brings the desire for purification from sin,

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

original or actual; and now the Church, the symbol of the soul, must be purified. The Bishop mingles wine with water, to denote the Humanity and the Divinity of Christ; to these he adds ashes to commemorate His death, and salt as an emblem of His resurrection; the mystic flood is poured in waves over the Altar, and thence all down the pavement of the Church, while hundreds of acolytes scale the ladders placed against the walls and the mystic liquid runs down them in glistening sheets to mingle with the mimic ripples on the floor. Let it run. When it has drained away, the holy oil flows golden and fragrant over the carved and gleaming walls, and pious hands are applying it to the exterior of the building — sometimes even to its roof — in copious floods. Now indeed the Church is ready for its destiny, even as the Christian emerges from Baptism ready for his God. The chants swell louder and sweeter, the Alleluia rings out triumphantly from a thousand hearts, the incense sends up its first perfumed spirals to hang among the fretted arches of the deep vault; the sub-deacons approach the Pontiff and offer for his blessing the rich vessels and vestments which are the wedding presents of the Faithful to the new-born Bride of Christ — the House is ready for the Master and His guests.

The guests are waiting still in the exiles' tent, with Knights and Prelates for their Guard of Honour. Such nobility could not be entertained save in a spotless mansion. Their names? Oh, they had many — Greek and Latin and Persian and Armenian — besides the "wonderful new names" that had been given them in Heaven, for these guests were Holy Martyrs, and their relics were to be placed in the stone of the High Altar, because the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass must always be offered

MEMORIES OF THE PANTHEON

on them to-day, even as when the fervent yet trembling Christian knelt before their tombs in the Catacombs, and the doomed Priest asked the Lord to accept the Sacrifice in honour of those whom perhaps he had laid there an hour before.

Oh, the adorable continuity of the Church! In my eyrie in the Rockies, one of the loneliest spots on earth, there came to my door quite unexpectedly one summer evening — it was the 28th of June — a missionary priest, very tired. He had driven some hundred and fifty miles to get to us; his game little horses, his buggy, his coat — everything about him was covered with dust, but his eyes beamed with benevolence as he said, “I have come to say Mass for you.” We could have kissed his feet. The next morning, very early, in the sitting-room that was a bower of wild flowers, my son and I knelt and watched him prepare the altar. From his worn portmanteau the first thing he drew out was a square of white alabaster of which the centre had been removed, replaced, and sealed with a cross sunk into the stone. Very reverently he slipped it under the white linen “corporal,” lighted the blest candles on either side — and began “Introibo ad altare Dei.”

The alabaster square contained relics of the Martyrs; and our humble home-made altar was, through them, His friends, as worthy of Him who was about to descend upon it as the High Altar of St. Peter’s on that morning of his Feast in Rome.

When St. Boniface cleansed and consecrated the Pantheon, he showed, in the name he gave it, that it was to be the shrine of many valiant ones, a shrine of which,

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

more truly than of any of our battlefields, it could be said:

“ On Fame’s eternal camping ground
Their silent tents are spread,
And glory guards, with solemn round,
The Bivouac of the Dead! ”

But one almost doubts whether the Pontiff himself appreciated the magnitude of the task he had undertaken. In person he went through the many Catacombs, for he was resolved that no smallest, humblest hero of the Lord should miss his share of the final triumph. He had had great cars prepared, decked with all possible richness, to convey the precious remains which had so long held the outposts of the city, to the Pantheon in its very heart; but when he had gone through all the dark, intricate passages of the underground cemeteries, tapping at the walls and examining every atom of surface that might conceal a once proscribed tomb, I think his artificers must have had to build more chariots for the returning army than they had expected, for it was very great. At last, however, all was ready. It was the 13th of May, Anno Domini 609, and a glorious morning, when the converging processions set forth, met, and entered the city in triumph. The Pontiff in his splendid vestments led the procession, swelled as it went along by all the inhabitants of Rome. Long serried ranks of prelates, priests, and monks followed him, carrying tall lighted tapers that gleamed but faintly in the Roman sun; the air was sweet with fragrances that grew stronger as the convoy passed along the flower-strewn streets, and the perfume of hundreds of censers swung up on the bright air. Rome was poor then, but the Romans had

MEMORIES OF THE PANTHEON

still found blue and crimson tapestries to hang from the windows, and every portico and window was crowded with eager onlookers who, as the procession approached, took up the roar of welcome with which the city greeted its dead. But I think a hush fell when the dead came into sight at the turn of the street or the entrance of the Square, and the enormous cars moved nearer, their dear, terrible burden piled high above the sides, and covered with silks and flowers, through which here and there showed just enough of a coffin's outline to wring the heart and let loose a rain of tears. "Twenty-seven great cars, filled with the bones of the Martyrs, did Boniface the Pope bring to the Pantheon, now consecrated to the Service of God and the honour of the Blessed Virgin."

Truly may that splendid temple, open to the sky, claim its title of "St. Mary of the Martyrs," and rightly did the Pontiff and his followers as they brought them in raise the triumphant shout: "The Saints shall rejoice in their beds! Arise, ye friends of God, and enter into the glory He has prepared for His elect!"

After all these great names it seems strange to have to record a very humble one, that of a poor workingman, in connection with the Pantheon, but I can never pass the famous Church without remembering a certain Giovanni Borgi, whose memory was held in great benediction in Rome in my young days.

During the preceding century the city was really in a fairly peaceful and prosperous condition, but the many institutions of charity which flourished under Gregory XVI and Pius IX had not reached the point where they

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

could provide night refuges for its many waifs and vagrants. There were numbers of poor boys—street arabs, as we should call them—who wandered about in the daytime, earning a little here and there but subsisting chiefly on charity and having no fixed dwelling-place of any kind. To these the broad steps and portico of the Pantheon offered at least shelter from the weather, and they used to gather there in crowds after dark and sleep—as boys can sleep—on the stones.

Now there was in Rome, towards 1780 or thereabouts, a poor mason called Giovanni Borgi. He belonged to the “opera di San Pietro”: that is, he was one of the workmen engaged for life by the administration of St. Peter’s for the maintenance and repair of the Basilica, the Vatican Palace, and its many dependent buildings. The “opera” was a close corporation and included artisans of every necessary craft, from mosaic workers to bricklayers, plumbers, and carpenters. Of course the privileges were largely hereditary, the Italian traditions of Guilds leading the son to follow the trade or profession of his father whenever possible, but high character and a blameless record were also indispensable qualifications for every appointment. Giovanni Borgi, though poor and almost illiterate, had worked all his life in the holy places and was regarded by his fellows as very nearly a saint. While he worked he prayed, and when working hours were over he went regularly to the great Hospital of Santo Spirito in the “Borgo,” and sat up late into the night nursing the sick and comforting the dying. The only reproach ever addressed to him was that he sometimes got sleepy over his work the morning after some unusually long vigil by the bedside of some sufferer who had entreated him to remain with him. Everybody loved

MEMORIES OF THE PANTHEON

the queer little man, and he loved all the world but himself. To this person he never gave a thought. Heaven had made him short and stumpy — but he could walk as well as the youngest; he had but one eye — but its sight was perfect; a funny bald head — but somebody had given him an old wig to cover it with; what was there to complain about? So, being empty of itself, his heart had room for others, and he took his fellow-beings' wants and sufferings very seriously.

One evening, before going to the hospital, he was accompanying a religious procession through the streets, when he noticed the dark forms of a little crowd of sleepers on the steps of the Pantheon. Coming nearer, he found that they were boys of various ages, ragged and forlorn, huddled together for warmth, and sound asleep. A little further on, under the tables where fowls were sold in the daytime, more of these waifs had taken refuge. The sight grieved the good mason deeply. He could not pass on and leave them thus. Rousing some of them, he asked many questions and learnt that not one of them had a home or a guardian. Orphans, runaway boys from the hill villages, waifs of one sort and another — here was one of those collections of abandoned children who would later become criminals unless some kind hand were stretched out to save them. Giovanni did not hesitate for a moment. He bade the little crowd follow him to his lodging. There was one of those great ground-floor rooms only used for storing properties or cattle — no Roman will sleep near the ground if he can help it, for fear of fever — and in this barn-like place Giovanni bestowed his ragged guests after giving them whatever he could beg or buy for their supper.

I do not think he went to the hospital at all that

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

night. I fancy he sat long in the brick-floored room, staring at the three wicks of the "lucerna" and begging Heaven to show him what to do next. In the morning he had to let his flock out, promising them some supper if they would come back at nightfall and exhorting them to be good meanwhile. The poor little creatures needed no second invitation and turned up faithfully, their numbers swelled by others to whom they had spoken of their good luck. Giovanni saw that he would soon have a community on his hands, and went to tell some priests, who were his friends, that he must be helped to teach and govern, as well as to maintain the forsaken children. For their food — breakfast and supper — he begged, and the kind-hearted neighbours responded generously. His first care was to teach them the Catechism, sitting among them in the evening and getting them to talk about themselves; he also taught them what little he knew of reading and writing; but it hurt him sorely to turn them out to face all the temptations of the streets during the daytime.

Very soon, the priests and some other charitable persons raised money to rent a part of an old palace, somewhat in ill-repair, but providing luxurious quarters in comparison to the Church steps and the fowl market. The priests offered to devote their evenings to teaching the boys, and found their efforts well rewarded, for the waifs, under the kind, firm rule of old Giovanni, were eager to make the best of their wonderful new advantages. He very soon solved the question of occupation during the daytime by placing them out in a number of workshops, where they could learn useful trades and earn something towards their own maintenance. He sent them out in the morning, giving each a loaf of bread to take with him for dinner; then he went to his own work at

MEMORIES OF THE PANTHEON

St. Peter's. During the dinner hour he would rush round from one workshop to another to see that his "children" were behaving themselves and that none had played truant. Then in the evening he would go and fetch those of whose steadfastness he had any doubts, and by night-fall the whole big family was safely housed in the corner of the old Palazzo.

Whatever they had earned during the day had to be rendered up to "Tata Giovanni" (Daddy John), as they had come to call him, and very dearly they came to love their queer, kind protector. Old people used to describe his taking them all out to Villa Borghese on holidays, and said it was wonderful to see the old fellow flying round, playing ball with the rest, his wig all awry and his mighty laugh showing how happy he was with his children.

His good work had found friends and supporters from the beginning, and, being brought to the notice of Pius VI, the Pontiff bought the Palazzo Ruggia as a permanent home for it and constituted himself its chief protector. Thus encouraged, Tata Giovanni started on a crusade which had for its object nothing less than the reclamation of all the good-for-nothing boys in Rome! He used to seek them out and follow them up, and if persuasion proved unavailing the dogged old man would seize them by the arm and march them off to his "Asilo" without more ado. Vagrancy, mendicancy, gambling roused his ire to such an extent that his name became a terror to all youthful evildoers, and they would fly at the mere mention of it. Life at the Asilo was conducted on lines of military precision. The youngsters rose early, heard Mass, got a good breakfast, and marched away to their work, where, as I have said, their guardian looked in on some of them — and they never knew which it would be.

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

— during the course of the day. When the Ave Maria rang they all came home, and as they passed into the house Tata Giovanni stood at the door with a bag in his hand, and into this they had to drop their earnings — not a baiocco was to be spent on the way or kept back!

Then came the lessons, followed by the rosary, and supper, this last the crown of the day for the tired, healthy young people. The old ideals still found many followers in those days, and it was not at all unusual to see some great Cardinal “gird himself with a towel” and trot humbly a score of times between the kitchen and the refectory to wait on the boys. There were a hundred of them by this time, and great was Daddy John’s preoccupation as to their morals. Long inured to shortening his hours of sleep, he would pace the dormitories all night long to see that all was as it should be, only sleeping himself for a short hour in the morning; and certainly Heaven blessed his efforts, for as years went on, and his waifs grew old enough to go out into the world on their own account and others took their places, not one that I ever heard of brought discredit on his education.

The sick at the hospital were not forgotten amid all these new labours and responsibilities; Tata Giovanni (no one ever called him anything else) went to them whenever he could, and, when he could not, he would send some of the older boys in his place, thus teaching them the lesson which had been the moral of his whole life — that no one must live for himself alone, and that the poorest and most ignorant can always find some sufferer to cheer and console. He died at last — the good, humble old workman — fifteen years after he had strayed from the procession to inspect the ragged sleepers on the steps

MEMORIES OF THE PANTHEON

of the Pantheon. He passed away on the 28th of June, 1798. The whole city mourned for him, and his boys were broken-hearted. His work of love had become a public institution and incorporated with another, of the same kind, lived till a few years ago, when it was swept aside and swallowed up with hundreds of other beneficent foundations in the “indiscriminate brigandage” of Rome’s latest rulers.

Several years after Tata Giovanni’s death a young gentleman of noble birth, who came from Sinigaglia, was appointed the director of the Asilo. It was not a distinguished appointment by any means; of course no salary was attached to the position — it was not till the recent laïcisation of charity that any but unpaid volunteers attended to the wants of the poor in the Eternal City. That made no difference to this handsome young man, for he came of a wealthy family, but his father, who had had great ambitions for his son, was by no means pleased to see him buried in an orphan asylum. The young man himself was suffering under great despondency. He desired with all his heart to be a priest, but his health was so bad that the Bishop did not think it wise to ordain him. As a child he had suffered a severe shock from falling into the water and narrowly escaping drowning, and ever since his early youth he had suffered from sharp attacks of epilepsy, terrible in themselves and yet more terrible in the constant dread that hung over their victim, who never knew when he might be struck down by the fearful visitation.

Very gladly did Giovanni Maria Mastai-Ferretti of Sinigaglia accept the charge of the Asilo which he had already constantly visited as a helper and instructor. And here, for four years, he who was to become Pius IX

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

lived with the orphans, subsisted on their rough fare, and devoted all his powers to making forsaken lads into good Christians and useful citizens. Workshops were now installed in the Asilo itself, and the higher arts went hand in hand with humble trades, each boy's talent and inclinations being carefully observed and consulted. Many good artists and good workmen were given to the world by the orphanage which had such humble beginnings, but for many of us its chief interest lies in its connection with the Pope, to whom it furnished the first opportunity of developing those gifts of organisation and command that later served humanity so well. Here he waited, a humble postulant on the threshold of the priesthood; here he prayed, as we know, those fervent, almost heart-broken prayers, that God would remove the infirmity which darkened his life and barred his way to the Altar; it was to his little room in the Asilo that he was brought back one night, apparently dying, having been struck down by one of those fearful attacks in the street. From here he used to go, day after day, to one or another of the city's holy places to pray for relief or resignation; from here he started on the pilgrimage to Loreto, where the first light broke across the darkness and he received the Divine assurance that his prayers were heard, that the affliction was about to pass away. It was, finally, in the little Church of San Giuseppe dei Falegnami (St. Joseph of the Carpenters), close to the Orphanage of Tata Giovanni, that he said his first Mass, on Easter Sunday, April 11, 1819. It was a very quiet affair, only a few near relations and his beloved orphans assisting at it. His uncle, Paulinus, who was a Canon of St. Peter's and who had been his tutor in sacred studies, stood beside him all through, for the Pope had only consented to

MEMORIES OF THE PANTHEON

the young man's ordination on condition that he would never celebrate the Holy Mysteries unless accompanied by another priest. This command the Pontiff rescinded soon afterwards at Father Mastai's earnest request. He felt assured that his malady would trouble him no more, and Pius VII, in reply, said, "I also believe that, my son." From that moment, during his long and eventful life, Giovanni Maria Mastai never suffered from any recurrence of the attacks which had, to outward seeming, saddened so many years of his life, but in reality had preserved and prepared him for his true vocation.

CHAPTER V

EARLY LIFE OF FATHER MASTAI

Birth in 1792—A Happy Family—His Youth—Epilepsy—The Church at the Time of Napoleon—Abduction of Pius to Avignon—Napoleon's Downfall—Return of the Pope to Rome—His Reception—Prophecies Regarding Pius IX—His Journey to Chile—Ocean Trip—Across the Andes—Failure of Mission—Rounding Cape Horn—English Settlement on the Cape—“Love-of-the-Soil”—The Falkland Islands.

NEARLY a hundred years have passed since the day when the young priest who was to be the best loved and the worst hated man in Europe said his first Mass, and Time's heavy wings have already blurred his memory in their flight, to a fading outline for the present generation. Very few now know anything about his early years, and in the story of them the finger of God is so clear that it seems to be worth while to make a brief record of the steps by which he was prepared for the burdens and honours of his Pontificate. In reading about his childhood one seems to be carried back not one, but many centuries, so sharply does it contrast with the ideals placed before children in these latter days. It seems to be a road on which there is no returning, but there can be no harm in glancing back at it for a moment.

It was on the 13th of May, 1792, that Pius IX was born, in the Umbrian seaport of Sinigaglia, in the Papal States. His father, Count Mastai-Ferretti, was the descendant of a long line of noblemen who had come thither from Crema in Lombardy towards the end of the Fourteenth Century. Home-loving but public-spirited men

EARLY LIFE OF FATHER MASTAI

they had been, and for a long time their fellow-citizens had confided to them the chief interests of the town, one of the family always filling the office of Mayor, which had thereby become practically hereditary, to the advantage and convenience of all concerned. So Count Mastai was Mayor of his native city at the time that his youngest son came to make the eighth in the house already filled with the laughter and play of three sons and four daughters. The mother of this large family was Caterina Solazzo, one of those noble ladies of whom there were yet so many in Italy when I was a child — a woman of high education and devout soul, who saw in her maternal duties the highest honour to which woman could aspire, and fulfilled them with whole-hearted joy and ardour. That meant work such as the modern woman, who thinks she is an example to toilers for the benefit of the race, would shrink from; the Countess had to rise very early so that she should be the first to approach her children's bedsides when the rising sun woke the nursery to the frolic and laughter of a new day, and from that moment till all were tucked up and asleep at night she never let them out of her sight. The first words they had ever spoken were the Holy Names, the first conscious movement of each baby hand had been trained to make the sign of the Cross.

They were all good and happy children, and the mother-heart prayed and watched and taught, doubtless forming noble plans for all, but as the youngest grew older his sweetness and goodness filled her with the hope that he might be called to the special service of God. Even as a tiny child his charity was of the alert, all-embracing kind that generally spells saintship in the end; toys, sweets, money — the little boy always found poor

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

children to bestow them upon and would beg for his protégés when his own stores were exhausted. Naturally of a particularly cheerful and sociable disposition — as indeed he remained all his life — yet he pondered much on the stories he heard and took things to heart in a way very unusual for a child of his age. All devout and loyal subjects of the Papacy were grieving at that time over the trials inflicted by Napoleon on Pius VII, kept a prisoner far from his own dominions and subjected to many insults and privations. The Countess one evening told her son that he must pray for the Holy Father, thus suffering at the hands of wicked men. The child was deeply impressed, he obeyed, and prayed with tears for the Pope, and then, in his young logic, proposed to pray for the prompt punishment of his persecutors. Great was the surprise of the ardent little champion when his mother pointed out that that would be wrong — he must pray for their conversion instead!

Giovanni Maria was about ten years old when, romping about the grounds of his father's country house, he fell into a pond and was nearly drowned. At first the accident seemed to have had only slight effects, but the malady which showed itself a little later and from which he suffered so long was, probably with reason, ascribed to that cause. It was a great sorrow to his father, who was bent upon his son's entering the army, a desire which the boy was ready to satisfy through filial sentiment, but which went contrary to all his own wishes and to those of his mother. He was sent to an ecclesiastical school, of course — no other could be thought of then for a gentleman's son — and in spite of bad health worked hard and attained much distinction. As he grew up — tall, handsome, and brilliantly intelligent — his father repeat-

EARLY LIFE OF FATHER MASTAI

edly applied for a commission in the Noble Guards for him, but Prince Barberini, then the chief authority in the Papal army, sternly refused to grant it, saying that an officer subject to epileptic attacks would be a danger to himself and others.*

By the time he was seventeen, it was fairly clear to all that he could never be a soldier, a relief to him and to his mother, though a terrible disappointment to the old Count. They had already brought him to Rome, and under the care of his Uncle Paulinus, a Canon of St. Peter's, he worked assiduously at his theological studies, always hoping and praying that the strange malady which had kept him out of the army would not, in the end, keep him out of the Church. Those early years in Rome were illuminated with the crowning joy of seeing Pius VII return in triumph to the Throne of St. Peter, an event which threw the Romans, gentle and simple, into a state of delirious joy. Pius VI had died in captivity at Valence, on the 29th of August, 1799; his successor, Cardinal Chiaramonti, was elected at Venice (Rome being in the hands of the French) on the 16th of March, 1800, and on the 3d of July of the same year the French, having been expelled from the Papal States by the Neapolitans and Austrians, the new Pope, who had taken the name of Pius VII, came back to his own. Everybody believed that once more "the Church would have peace"; Napoleon, whose genius realised that there was no governing a nation of atheists, had restored Religion to her public place,

* In a former volume I stated that Pius IX had for a short time served in the Noble Guards. This was an error, for he never obtained admittance, although I believe a portrait of him in the uniform was extant in the earlier years of the Nineteenth Century. It may have been altogether a "fake" or else taken to please his father when there appeared to be some hope of the latter's ambition being fulfilled.

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

and was preparing, by the Concordat, to harmonise Church and State as far as the times would allow. But the Napoleon whose unerring eye showed him the necessity of Religion for mankind had counted without the other Napoleon, whose towering ambition demanded the sacrifice of all other claims to itself. With his coronation as Emperor all barriers seemed to break down; the Pope was to become his submissive vassal or cease to reign. His demands became more imperious and unreasonable every day and reached the limit of arrogance when he decided that the centre of Christendom was to be transferred to Avignon; France was to enjoy that glory instead of Italy, and the Pope, no longer an independent sovereign, was to rule the Church for the advantage and according to the caprices of the Emperor.

This proposition was first made soon after the election in Venice, when Napoleon had brought the Pope to Paris to crown him in Notre Dame. Pius VII replied, in an outburst of righteous indignation, that rather than so degrade his office he would resign it, and cause another election to be carried through; Napoleon could then do as he pleased with the obscure Benedictine monk who would be left on his hands!

Surprised at his firmness, the Emperor yielded for the moment and permitted him to return to Rome, but, amidst all the rejoicings with which he was greeted, the good Pope's heart was heavy. He knew the character of his adversary too well. On the day of his coronation, at the foot of the altar, Napoleon had solemnly sworn to uphold and protect the Church. Immediately afterwards had come the insulting proposal to transfer the seat of her government to his own dominions. Who could say what he would do next?

EARLY LIFE OF FATHER MASTAI

That question did not long wait for its answer. The notion of having the Papacy established at Avignon was too alluring to be renounced. Again and again was it put forward, each time accompanied by some outrageous demand. The Pope was informed that he was to close all the Roman ports to British vessels; that he was to declare war (!) on Great Britain; that he was to annul the marriage of Jerome, the Emperor's brother, with a Protestant lady in America; and so on. And always Pius VII replied by his quiet "non possumus"—"we cannot." Then the great break came. The Emperor permitted himself an outburst of temper in which all considerations of policy and decency were thrown to the winds. On the 13th of May, 1809, the trembling world was informed that the States of the Church had become part of the French Empire. On the 10th of June all the Pope's insignia in Rome were torn down and replaced by the heraldic *réchauffé*, which now represented the arms of France; Rome was elevated to the dignity of being proclaimed "a free French city"!

The outraged Pontiff responded by laying the usurper and his supporters under the major excommunication, and then came the crowning atrocity, the one which Napoleon, a contrite prisoner in St. Helena, called the beginning of his own downfall.

In the darkness of a soft summer night the Vatican was surrounded by French troops, and General Radet, sickly frightened at the task laid upon him, made his way with a detachment of soldiers to the Pope's bedroom. The horrified attendants in the corridors and anterooms were forcibly silenced, and Pius VII was roused from his sleep by the sudden entrance of this sinister company. He was a brave man, and, although it seemed only too probable

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

that they had come to murder him, he lost neither his nerve nor his dignity. He asked them what the errand was which caused them thus to transgress on the rules of respect. At first the General and his aides stood dumb, trembling with fear before the helpless old man. At last Radet found his tongue and delivered his master's orders. The Pope was to rise at once and come downstairs, where a coach was waiting to take him into France. The instructions were that he was to be taken by force if he resisted, but so great was the awe inspired by his sacred person that, even in pronouncing the arrest, Radet could not bring himself to touch his victim.

There was no question of physical resistance. Gathering courage from the Pontiff's calm demeanour, Radet gave him a few minutes to put on his clothes, and then hurried him downstairs surrounded by the soldiers. Only two attendants were allowed to follow him, he was hustled into the coach; mounted guards closed in on every side, and the party galloped at full speed out of the Porta del Popolo, heading for the north. By this time the people had learnt what was happening, and they came out in crowds and ran beside the coach, entreating with tears and sobs that their Father might not be taken away from them. The Pope blessed them from the carriage window as he was whirled along; soon all the mourning crowd was left behind, but at each town that he passed through in his dominions the same heart-rending scenes were renewed. His captors dared not pause — some attempt at a rescue might yet snatch him from their grasp — and it was only when they reached Grenoble that they stayed their flight. From there he was transferred to Savona, where he passed three melancholy years of captivity; when Napoleon was preparing to start on the Russian

EARLY LIFE OF FATHER MASTAI

Campaign, he brought the Pope to Fontainebleau for safer keeping, and there Pius VII remained for nearly two years more.

The first care of the Allies after the taking of Paris on the 31st of March, 1814, was to officially reinstate the Pope in his temporal sovereignty, and secure it from future molestation, but Pius VII was even then approaching his own frontier. After Leipsic and the train of disasters which marked the close of 1813, Napoleon had informed his prisoner that he was free to go whither he chose. But it was not until the 25th of January following that the preparations for his journey were sufficiently completed for the Pope to leave Fontainebleau, and then, worn out with suffering of mind and body, he had to travel by stages of only a few miles at a time and to rest for long periods on the way. He finally reached Rome in May of that year, a few weeks after Napoleon had signed his abdication at Fontainebleau. Then for Napoleon came Elba,—the hundred days,—the short triumph, the irrevocable eclipse, and the five years at St. Helena. “Qui mange du Pape en meurt.”

I used to have among my possessions a number of old coloured drawings, the original designs for the decorations put up in Rome for the return of Pius VII. It was a triumph not decreed by politicians, but a spontaneous outburst of overwhelming joy. For five years the entire government of the Church had been suspended; not once had the Pontiff been allowed to make his voice heard in her affairs. There is something strangely sinister in that silence, during which no Bishops were appointed, and not a single line was added to the ecclesiastical archives. The fear and depression that weighed down Catholic hearts was indescribable, and the relief

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

when the cloud lifted almost too overwhelming to be borne. The Papal States had suffered much during those years, and the Pope's own city worst of all. Business was at a standstill, more than a third of the population had migrated elsewhere, preferring exile to the tyranny of the French rule. Those who remained were frightfully impoverished by heavy taxation and by the general paralysis of commerce which Napoleon's wars and blockades had brought not only on Italy but on the whole of Europe.

The populations turned out *en masse* to meet their sovereign as he travelled home, and as he neared Rome many nobles who had retired to their estates came to accompany him on the last stages of his journey. Among these were Count Mastai-Ferretti and his son, Giovanni Maria, now eighteen years of age. The event made a profound impression on the young man. As a child he had wept and prayed for the Holy Father in his captivity; through the first years of his youth the thought of Pius VII, a helpless prisoner, had ever been present to his mind and many a fervent prayer had gone up for his sovereign's and his country's deliverance. Now it had come, and to him, not yet illuminated with knowledge of the future, as well as to all those around him, it seemed as if all trouble were passed away and the sun that shone so gloriously on that 24th of May, when the people took the horses from the Pope's carriage and themselves dragged it through the rejoicing streets, were but an earnest of unbroken peace and happiness to come. Rome had seen many festivals, but none so spontaneously, madly joyful as this. From every window floated crimson and blue silk draperies rich with gold; the thousands of balconies were wreathed in flowers, and the vast procession moved along in a rain of roses and lilies and violets show-

EARLY LIFE OF FATHER MASTAI

ered from above; music was everywhere, but it was drowned in the shouts and hosannas of the multitude that had gone out to meet the traveller with palms in their hands and now thronged the way before, beside, behind him. The women were weeping for joy and audibly thanking God for this great day; a hundred thousand persons knelt to receive his blessing, and many, many of them must have remembered how they knelt to receive it last, as the coach was whirled along the highway in the summer's dawn and the weeping supplicants just caught a glimpse of the pale face and the blessing hand as it flashed by. Every town in the dominions had raised its triumphal arches, gathered all its flowers for his progress, but Rome surpassed them and all the records of herself that day. The "Te Deum" was sung in all the Churches as it had never been sung before, Rome's thousand bells rang as if they would never cease; and when darkness fell, St. Peter's gathered the stars to itself, and the magic dome, a hive of breathing gold, glowed through the night, a beacon of joy to the dwellers in a hundred mountain towns of Sabina and Latium and all the country round.

Thirty-two years were to elapse before the youth kneeling beside his father to receive the Pope's blessing on that day would himself ascend the Papal Throne, but, strange to say, Pius VII himself had already foreseen the event. Pius IX had been reigning for some years when, through the merest accident, the written prophecy was discovered. Pius VII, while a prisoner at Fontainebleau, one day handed to his bodyservant a sealed packet, saying that it was not to be opened until 1846. The man religiously regarded the prohibition and put the packet away carefully. Before his own death he gave it to his

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

son, repeating the Pope's instructions. Eighteen forty-six was still far off, and the son laid the thing aside and had forgotten all about it when the year in question came round. Having occasion, however, to look through a number of old papers, he came across this, and broke the seal. Inside, in Pius VII's handwriting, were these words: "The prelate who fills the office of Bishop of Imola in 1846 will be elected Pope and will take the name of Pius IX."

Another prophecy, that of the venerable servant of God, Anna Maria Taigi, uttered in 1823, is very full and clear. After describing minutely the revolution of 1848 and all the sufferings that Rome and its ruler would undergo at that time, she added, "The Pope whose destiny this is, is now a simple priest and far beyond the sea." After minutely describing the personal appearance of Pius IX, she continued: "He will be elected in a very unusual way and contrary to his own and general expectation. He will inaugurate many wise reforms, which, if gratefully and wisely accepted by the people, will bring great blessings upon them. His name will be honoured throughout the world." She spoke much of the great trials that he was to undergo in defence of the Church, and of the special assistance Heaven would give him to sustain them, and also of the gift of miracles which would be bestowed on him during the latter years of his life. All that came to pass precisely as the Saint foretold, and the present generation seems to be seeing the beginning of the fulfilment of her closing prophecy: "At last, after many and varied trials and humiliations, the Church shall achieve, before the eyes of the world, such a glorious triumph that men will be struck silent with awe and admiration."

EARLY LIFE OF FATHER MASTAI

The famous prophecy of St. Malachy, the Archbishop of Armagh, who died at Clairvaux in the arms of his friend, St. Bernard, in 1148, designated the title of Pius IX as "Crux de Cruce"—"Cross of a Cross"—and certainly that prediction, supposed to refer to the Cross of Savoy, was fulfilled!

Anna Maria Taigi's mention of a "simple priest then beyond the sea" refers to the mission to Chile, undertaken by Pius IX when he was as yet only Father Mastai, the director of Tata Giovanni's orphanage. It is an episode of his history so generally forgotten that it seems worth while to recall it briefly to the minds of Catholic readers. The Republic of Chile was just five years old—it concluded its victorious struggle with Spain for independence in 1818—when the government sent a respected prelate, Canon Cienfuegos, to Rome to ask Pius VII to reorganise ecclesiastical matters in Chile, where everything had been left in a very unsatisfactory condition after the separation from the Mother Country.

Pius VII gladly complied with the request. The mission would require delicate handling and he singled out a diplomatist prelate, Monsignor Muzi, then Auditor of the Nunciatura at Vienna, for its accomplishment. In order that his rank should be consonant with its dignity, Monsignor Muzi was made Archbishop of Philippi, and then appointed Vicar Apostolic of Chile. He asked that Father Mastai might accompany him as Auditor, a post corresponding to that of "Conseiller d'Ambassade" in a secular embassy; and another well-known ecclesiastic, Father Sallusti, was named as the secretary.

Long years afterwards, one of the "boys" described the last evening of Father Mastai at the Asilo. He had as yet said nothing to them of his approaching departure,

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

but at supper they noticed that he seemed very sad. When the meal was over and they were about to leave the table, he motioned to them to sit down again, as he had something to say to them. Then he told them that the next day he must leave them, to travel far away on the business of the Church. There were a hundred and twenty boys, big and little, in the hall, and there broke from them one simultaneous cry of grief. Sobbing and wailing, they threw themselves upon him, the little ones climbing up into his arms and clinging to his knees, others catching at his garments as if to hold him back by force, and those who could not reach him through the press lifting up their voices in supplication that the "Caro Padre" would not leave them. The Father wept, too, as he caressed and embraced the "piccolini," and, when at last he tore himself away and shut himself up in his room, a number of the older boys broke in and insisted on staying with him all night. The dear patient man did not resent thus being robbed of his rest; he let them have their way, and talked to them long and earnestly of their present duties and their future lives. He would return some day, and how eagerly he would enquire for every one by name, how rejoiced he would be at a good report, how immeasurably grieved at a bad one.

With the dawn he had to leave them, and, as the narrator said, "We were orphans more than ever before."

Great as was the grief of "Tata Giovanni's" boys on losing their beloved Director, it did not equal the despair and indignation of Countess Mastai when she learnt that her son had been picked out for a journey which was full of perils and hardships so late as twenty years ago, and in those early days was veritably appalling.

To the ardent young priest, this fact had only added

EARLY LIFE OF FATHER MASTAI

to the readiness he felt in carrying out the Pope's wishes; he asked nothing better than to suffer in such a cause, but his mother, without saying anything to him, flew to Cardinal Consalvi, then Secretary of State, and implored that the appointment might be cancelled. Pius VII, however, refused to yield to her entreaties, and, when Father Mastai came to receive his final blessing before departing, he told him of the Countess's request and added, "I assured her that you would return safe and sound."

The embassy was to embark at Genoa, and it was there, while waiting for the final preparations to be made, that its members received the sad news of the death of Pius VII. This caused delay, and it was only after the election of Leo XII and his confirmation of Archbishop Muzi's powers that the mission finally sailed from Genoa, on the 5th of October, 1823. Ninety years ago! The world has shrunk since then; the voyage that I made in 1885 in three weeks took Monsignor Muzi and his companions three months to accomplish. The "good barque *Eloise*," manned by "thirty experienced seamen," had been chartered for the expedition, but one's heart aches to think of what those three good ecclesiastics must have suffered in one way and another on board of her. Very few Italians of their class are good sailors and all the horrors of seasickness were certainly theirs, combined with the unsavoury and unwholesome food that was all people had to depend upon during sea-journeys before the discovery of steam and cold storage. Storm after storm broke over the little vessel; she was nearly wrecked off Teneriffe; one dreadful night, the 5th of November, she was waylaid by pirates, who overhauled her from stem to stern seeking for plunder, and only abandoned her — in furious disgust — when Father Mastai had shown them

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

that there was not a single article of value on board. Then came a sad encounter with a Brazilian slave trader, packed with unfortunate negroes, a sight most grievous and terrible to the kind-hearted priests; and then, after two long months' sailing, a fearful storm which lasted eight days, during which the *Eloïse* was so beaten about that no one hoped to escape alive. It was all a searching dispensation for quiet, stay-at-home Italian gentlemen who had followed their pious way hitherto along the most familiar lines!

They reached Monte-Video on New Year's Day, 1824, stopped a few days for repairs, and made Buenos Ayres soon after, their joy at finding themselves on *terra firma* much tempered by the extremely rude reception accorded to them by the civil authorities. But Buenos Ayres was merely the starting-point for the most difficult part of the journey, the crossing of the Andes. Had the good Countess Mastai-Ferretti had the slightest idea of what her cherished son was to encounter there, I believe she would have died of anxiety before his return! I only met one or two Europeans, when I was in Chile, who had accomplished the feat, and they told me that nothing would induce them to attempt it again. I have described some of the terrors of the passes in former works,* and will not enlarge upon them here. Suffice it to say that for two whole months Monsignor Muzi and Fathers Sallusti and Mastai rode through those appalling solitudes, over the bridle-paths cut in the face of the rock that towers thousands of feet above and sinks sheer down thousands of feet below, paths where one false step means death, and so narrow in some places that, if two parties

* "Reminiscences of a Diplomatist's Wife" (Dodd, Mead & Co.); "The Looms of Time" (Isbister).

EARLY LIFE OF FATHER MASTAI

meet, it is usual for them — if they are not the fighting sort — to decide on the spin of a coin which shall dismount, pitch its mules over the precipice, and crawl past the winners as best they can — to continue the journey on foot!

The resting-places are even now the haunts of outlaws and robbers. The members of the Roman Embassy of 1824 only escaped being murdered *en masse*, because, through some unforeseen occurrence, they changed the time of their departure from a hamlet called Desmochadas. Had they waited till the hour first fixed upon, they would have shared the fate of a party of merchants who, on that day, were massacred, to a man, by a band of robbers. It was Father Mastai who discovered — and stayed behind to take care of — a sick English officer, named Miller, forsaken in a wayside inn; and it was Father Mastai, the others said, who had during the whole journey sustained their courage by his unfailing fun and good-humour. It seems to me that this is not the least glorious note in all his wonderful record, and because few, even of those who most loved and venerated him in his later years, have ever heard of it I have written it here. The whole thing, somehow, is so absolutely Pius IX!

Very sore and weary, the travellers reached Santiago on the 17th of March, only to encounter every kind of obstacle and annoyance in the attempt to carry out the object of their mission. The government had changed, and the party in power had no desire to come to an understanding with the Holy See. The people, indeed, received the envoys most enthusiastically, but Chile in 1824 was apparently much what I found it in 1885 — a country of ardent believers ruled by atheists. Let some

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

expert explain the problem, I cannot! For seven months Monsignor Muzi remained in Santiago, perseveringly trying to clear matters up and reach some *modus vivendi* between Church and State. But his efforts were nullified by the hostility of the President and his supporters, and at last he had to acknowledge his defeat and withdraw from the conflict.

The *Eloise* meanwhile had successfully rounded Cape Horn and reached Valparaiso, and on the 19th of October the Archbishop and his party embarked once more on the gallant little vessel and started for home. Of course no sailing vessel can pass through the twisting narrows and rocks of the Straits of Magellan, so for three weeks — surely the most miserable of their lives — those poor priests, children of Italy and the sun, shivered in the awful cold of those frozen regions, where the sea is the colour of cold steel, and the sailors, as they have often told me, come down from the deck at night with their garments frozen stiff, and have to work their way into them, still frozen stiff as boards, in the morning. My own travelling in that part of the world did not include the rounding of Cape Horn, but even the passage of the Straits, in a big liner, with the water smooth as glass, was such a freezingly wretched experience that, having made it once, the prospect of its repetition took something away from my eagerness to go home. But outside the Horn, with the Antarctic Ocean, unbroken from the South Pole, flinging its icy rollers against a little sailing vessel that took three weeks to beat up on the other side — *that*, the skippers have told me, furnishes merchant seamen with their best nightmares to their dying day! Most of the coal supply for the West Coast is carried by this route, and by the time it

EARLY LIFE OF FATHER MASTAI

has reached the Horn the coal, loaded under the damp English skies, has ignited and the remainder of the trip is made with hatches battened down and the pleasing knowledge that a puff of air finding its way into the hold will send the whole mass into a blaze!

Yet, there is a little English colony that lives and flourishes in these cold seas some two hundred and fifty miles to the east of the Horn, and we, in England, wear its wool and eat its mutton quite habitually. I never could learn my geography properly until I began to travel round the world. From that time maps became a special recreation of mine, and I had, when travelling through the Straits of Magellan, thought with both curiosity and pity of the handful of islands so much more exposed than even we were in those comfortless days. I was told the place was a purgatory — that it was just possible to carry on life, and that no one stayed there who could help it. Some time afterwards, when we were established in Santiago, a card was brought up and I gazed at it for a moment in some bewilderment — “The Governor of the Falkland Islands!” Then it was true! Our indomitable fellow-countrymen had really added another mesh to the net of Empire which Great Britain has cast over the world. My reflections were interrupted by the entrance of a big, handsome man, who looked as if he had just come out of Yorkshire. His clear blue eyes, ruddy cheeks, and joyful bearing belied the sad tales I had heard, and when, in the course of conversation, I asked some timid questions about his frozen place of exile, he laughed in a way that was good to hear. Frozen? Exile? Why, he would not live anywhere else for the world! A grand climate, pleasant society, and better pasturage for sheep than could be found anywhere

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

else! "Pasturage!" I exclaimed. "Do you mean to say that anything will *grow* in that latitude?" "Grow? I should think so!" he replied. "We get the back wash of the Gulf Stream down there, and our sheep can graze all winter in the open. Why, I have three trees, *real trees*, on Stanley Island! I wish you and Mr. Fraser would come and pay me a visit there. My wife and daughters would be so delighted to see you." Then, turning to my husband, he continued: "Our flocks are getting too big for their feeding grounds, so I have come to ask the Chilean Government to rent us five hundred thousand acres in Patagonia for a supplementary run. The pasturage is not as good as that in the Falklands, but it will be better than nothing."

Of course we instantly invited our visitor to dine. An English face was always a joy to look at where one saw so few, and this man brought the very atmosphere of the North Country with him. He told us many interesting details about his little domain, the management of which he took very seriously and evidently accomplished with much success. "Of course I could do more," he said regretfully, "if it were not for the blind hostility of the Opposition." "Does it reach so far?" I asked politely. "I should have thought there was quite enough to keep it busy at home."

"Oh, I don't mean the little crowd at Westminster," he replied indignantly. "Please understand, Mrs. Fraser, that I have an opposition of *my own!*"

"I do congratulate you," I said; "that is certainly a triumph! What Britisher could ask more?"

There is a little plant of which every Englishman carries the seeds about with him. It is called Love-of-the-soil. Give him a bit of land anywhere — the best or the

EARLY LIFE OF FATHER MASTAI

worst, a vast fertile tract or a few miles of desert island; tell him it is his very own to do as he likes with, and, before you can turn round, every grain of its dust is sprouting with Love-of-the-soil. He sees, knows, loves only that spot. He will fight for it, work for it, cheat for it if need be, perhaps even slay; for to him it has taken on the sacred character of the mother country, it is *his* piece of England and woe to any one who tries to take it away from him! That is why English colonies succeed. And it is the lack of this passion for the land which makes bad colonists of men of other nationalities. The Americans are simply brutal about their possessions. Out here in the Northwest one is horrified at the general callousness. I have watched people making what *we* should call a home, breaking new land, building a charming house, working hard to make everything within and without as perfect as they know how. A cloud of dust shows up on the road, a motor-car full of "land grabbers" kicks and coughs and stinks at the gate; the next minute the hard-eyed hucksters are being shown into all the sacred arena of airy rooms, and flowering garden, are fingering, valuing, depreciating; there follows an hour or two of hard bargaining, and then your neighbour's wife flies across lots to tell you, with shining eyes, "We've sold the place!" "Sold the place?" I cry. "Why, I thought it was to be your home!" "What does that matter?" she retorts, huffed, "I got my price! We can easily build another house that we shall like just as much."

I suppose it is a form of the disease now diagnosed as Americanitis, the feverish restlessness that would rather "trek" anywhere than stay put for more than a year or two. But is a terrible disqualification for building a State. Since I have seen it at close quarters, I have often

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

thought of the contrast presented by that handful of North Country shepherds and their descendants, in the Falklands,* so proud of doing their best with the best they could get, pleased with their drizzly climate (it rains two hundred and fifty days in the year), because it is so English, proud of their thriving little country, sending out their pelts and mutton by the once-a-month steamer, actually growing their pelargoniums and fuchsias in the open air, and so furiously interested in their miniature politics that the Government and the Opposition are ready to knock each other forty ways from Sunday every time they meet! Good luck and long life to you, my incorrigible brothers! The secret of success is certainly yours, and it all comes from the little plant called Love-of-the-soil.

* The Islands, about a hundred in number, but most of them very small, and uninhabited, have been the cause of sharp contention and have changed hands several times since their discovery in 1592—France, Spain, England, and the United States have variously claimed them. Twice the matter has been decided by an Englishman's landing and running up the Union Jack. The last time this occurred was in 1833, when, in the middle of the quarrel, Captain Falkland took possession of them on his own responsibility. Great Britain has held them ever since as one of her recognised colonies. They are self-governing and have a population altogether of two thousand souls; the capital, Stanley, claiming nearly half of the number.

CHAPTER VI

POPE PIUS IX

Director of Ospizio di San Michele—A Splendid Record—Archbishop of Spoleto—A Turbulent Populace—Order Restored—Revolution in Europe—Spoleto Saved—The Earthquake in Umbria—New Post at Imola—Secret Societies—A Cardinal—Attack upon the Three Prelates—The Cardinal's Bravery—How the Saints Forgive—Pope Pius IX—His Charity and Justice—Defenders of the Poor—Anecdotes of the Cardinal's Generosity.

ATTER his return from Chile, Father Giovanni Maria Mastai was appointed Director of the Ospizio di San Michele, a position which could not be called a great advancement in the eyes of the world, but which carried with it a most weighty burden of responsibility. Some idea of this charge can be grasped when we explain that the so-called "Hospital" embraced six separate large establishments: namely, an orphanage for boys, another for girls, both containing complete schools for general education as well as for the learning of trades and arts; a home for the aged poor, a "protector" for unruly boys, a reformatory for fallen women — and a prison for political offenders. The endowments of the Ospizio, together with its earnings, rendered an income of fifty thousand dollars a year, then considered an ample sum for providing for the wants of some thousands of persons. It will readily be understood that this left little or nothing over for salaries to those in charge, but, fortunately, in those days these were not needed, as all the employés, except a few servants, were priests and religious, who gave their services for nothing except food and shelter.

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

In his own financial affairs, Father Mastai was the worst manager possible; he never kept any money longer than was needed to give it away; but where other funds were concerned he made no mistakes, and his administration was as wise and careful as possible. His friends and family seem to have been a little surprised when his labours and trials during the South American mission received no more public recognition than this appointment to a burdensome task, but he himself was delighted. He had looked back to the years spent with "Tata Giovanni's" boys with homesick regret; the work at San Michele was of the same kind on a much larger scale, more orphans to train, more poor to cherish, more sinners to help and save, and his generous heart was fully satisfied. The Holy Father, Leo XII, watched the new Director closely during the two years he left him in charge. At the end of that short time the improvement in all the different departments of the Ospizio was fully evident, and its self-supporting funds had increased, in spite of the innovation introduced by the new Director, who ordained that a fair share of the inmates' earnings should be set aside for their own after use and benefit.

Leo XII was now satisfied that he had not been mistaken in his judgment of Father Mastai's abilities and virtues, so, without any intermediate promotion, on the 21st of May, 1827, he appointed him Archbishop of Spoleto, the Pope's own native town. Great was the grief of the vast family at San Michele on learning the news, for whether as simple priest, powerful prelate, or Supreme Pontiff, Pius IX was always enthusiastically loved by all who approached him.

Spoleto, as we know it to-day — but how can I describe it? One magic pen has pictured the Umbrian cities

POPE PIUS IX

with such divine felicity that the rest of us must be for ever mute. Read what Edward Hutton says about Spoleto—"a beautiful city of rose colour set on a high hill."—"Spoleto, like a tall and sweet maiden,—kneeling at the head of her long valley under the soft sky." Read all that that pure-souled genius has written about Umbria and Tuscany, and you will know whatever your mind can grasp of that which the poet and the mystic and the artist feel in that immortal region; my business is not with them, but with the "*anima latina*" of a holy, hard-working prelate sent in troublous times to govern a turbulent populace already inoculated with the fever of revolution, and preserving, in its murderous hatreds, the best traditions of the late Middle Ages.

This was what the new Archbishop saw before him as, with his two brothers, he approached Spoleto towards the end of June, 1827: "A violent party feud raging between two factions, finding its way into families, separating father from son, brother from brother, sister from sister. Even the clergy had allowed themselves to be drawn into the unhappy conflict, and, as a natural consequence, the interests of religion were suffering lamentably." * So the new Archbishop had no light task before him. I fancy, however, that his was a nature which was happiest in strenuous effort. There are people, even in the modern world, who seem out of place unless they are leading a forlorn hope. We had a friend long years ago, the Marquis de Bâcourt, a delightful French diplomatist, with whom, after the vagrant manner of diplomats, we foregathered in various parts of the world before meeting him again in Chile, which certainly

* "A Popular Life of Pius IX," Rev. Richard Brennan. (Benziger, 1877.)

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

just then was not a bed of roses for foreign representatives. I was bewailing our own luck and commiserating his, when he interrupted me by exclaiming: "Oh, but I am really enjoying myself! I *love* difficult and disagreeable affairs!"

Of these we know that Monsignor Mastai found many to adjust in his new charge, and that he was signally successful in smoothing them out. Within two years faction had died in the pretty Umbrian city on the hill, enemies were reconciled, order restored, and the clergy aroused to new zeal and regularity under his wise, strict rule. At the end of those two years he held the people's hearts in his hands, and well it was for them that he did, for thus he was enabled to save the town and its inhabitants from the terrible danger which suddenly threatened to overwhelm Spoleto in 1830. Leo XII had died on the 10th of February of the preceding year, and had been succeeded by Pius VIII, whose beneficent reign was ended all too soon by death on the eve of All Saints', 1830. The gentle old man had, during his short Pontificate, attacked and handled with vigour and wisdom some of the most important questions of the day, notably in his regulations for mixed marriages and in his stern condemnation of the secret societies; these had, during the last momentous year of his life, produced the harvest of revolution which convulsed Europe more or less from Warsaw to Rome; yet worse was to come, but Pius VIII was spared the trial of witnessing it. That was reserved for his successor, Gregory XVI, sturdy, imperturbable, broad-shouldered, bringing with him the breezes of the Julian Alps and the hard good sense of the Venetian from the mountains and the sea. He needed it all, for, as I have said elsewhere, the storm that had muttered so long broke

POPE PIUS IX

loose even before his election; the henchmen of anarchy, who had long been secretly busy in the Papal States, started a revolution in Rome itself in February, 1830; this was promptly quelled, but the trouble in the more northerly provinces was very serious and the Pope had to appeal to Austria to subdue it.

Spoletō had by no means escaped the general infection, but the Archbishop had, by constant watchfulness and his great personal influence, succeeded in preventing any open outbreak of the revolutionary spirit which lurked there; what was his horror and that of the citizens when it became known that a body of four thousand insurgents, retreating before the Austrians, were approaching the town with the intention of holding it against their pursuers! The place was in a panic — the inhabitants already saw themselves trampled down and massacred in the bloody conflict that would take place — saw the stern punishment that the Austrians would inflict upon them for harbouring the desperate revolutionaries. It was in this emergency that Giovanni Maria Mastai showed the coolness of a statesman and the courage of a soldier. At the risk of his life he drove at full speed to the Austrian headquarters and insisted on interviewing the Commander. To the surprised General he explained that the armed insurgents who were demanding Spoletō's hospitality at the point of the bayonet were strangers to her, that she was in no way responsible for them and that she disclaimed all part in their designs. This point being made clear, he undertook to bring the rebels to submission, single-handed, if the General would promise not to let his own men enter Spoletō. The promise was, naturally, most readily given, the irritated commander being only too glad to relinquish an unpleasant job. And then

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

the Archbishop, getting into his carriage again, rushed off to intercept the revolutionaries in their march on the town.

To them he spoke only in words of tenderest pity. He said he knew that they had been misled and deceived by wicked men, that their hearts were not in this conflict, but really loyal to their sovereign, the Pope; he told them that he could sympathise with their present situation, brought about by despair at finding themselves far from their houses, without means of returning, and threatened with the reprisals of the Austrians. He showed them the hopelessness of the struggle into which they had been drawn, and promised them, if they would lay down their arms, not only a free pardon, but the means of returning to their homes. His fatherly kindness carried all before it. Touched and grateful, they surrendered their funny old muskets and cannon; the Archbishop went to his palace, scraped together all the money he had or could borrow on his own credit, and came back with twenty thousand francs which he distributed amongst them according to their needs, and had the joy of seeing them all depart, pacified and sober, for their respective provinces.

History does not say that the people of Spoleto suggested any refunding of that big sum of money, but they showed their gratitude and delight in very enthusiastic ways, illuminating the city, having processions and fireworks in honour of him who had obtained its deliverance, and cheering to the skies whenever he showed himself, all of which was doubtless most gratifying to their kind Pastor's heart; but he was almost too busy to think much about such things at that moment, having been charged by the Secretary of State with the conduct of

POPE PIUS IX

all civil matters in Umbria, the proper authorities — to a man — having fled at the approach of the Austrians.

Talking of those penniless rebels, I ought to say that there was one among them whom the Archbishop did not send home, because the man had no home to go to. So he brought him into his own house, kept him there in safety and comfort, and, regardless of what was sure to be said in Rome about his interceding for such a character, sent to beg the Pope to give him a passport which would take him across the frontier. The passport was granted, and the next time any communication passed between the charitable host and his quondam pensioner the former had become Pius IX and the latter Napoleon III, Emperor of the French.

In 1832 the whole province of Umbria was desolated by a destructive earthquake, in which a great number of lives were lost and many thousands of persons rendered homeless. Spoleto suffered severely and once more the good Archbishop was the comfort and mainstay of his people. He seemed to be everywhere at once and called up doctors, nurses, and provisions with miraculous celerity, finding money somehow for all the dreadful needs and sending aid of every kind to the more distant places where he could not go himself. Other pastors were doing all they could for their own flocks, but Monsignor Mastai's zeal and charity were so conspicuous as to draw down the special and enthusiastic commendation of Gregory XVI, who immediately promoted him to the Archbishopsric of Imola, a far more important See than that of Spoleto. Naturally the Spoleto people were frantic at the idea of losing him and sent a deputation of their most notable citizens to Rome to beg the Pope to change his mind. But they failed in their object, and at the

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

appointed time their Archbishop received their last farewells — a tumult of tears and blessings — and set out for his new post, stopping on the road at Loreto to ask for Heaven's assistance, as he had asked for it in his early youth, when his malady appeared to be barring his way to the priesthood.

He found even more to do at Imola than he had at Spoleto in the matters of reorganisation and reform, and he threw himself into the work with all the ardour of his brave energetic soul, encountering many trials, but coming victoriously through them all. Of course he made bitter enemies, for his boundless charity to the poor broke out in a blaze of indignation whenever he found that they were being oppressed or defrauded. In such cases instant retribution overtook the offender, and no amount of apparent contrition could ever obtain office for him again if it depended on the decision of the Archbishop.

The secret societies, following their usual programme, had decided to "remove" Monsignor Mastai without delay. He was sitting in his study one morning when his faithful old servant, Baladelli, who had accompanied him everywhere, entered to say that a lady, who seemed in a great hurry, begged him to grant her a few minutes' "conversation."

"Ask her to wait a little," said the Archbishop, as he rose and went into his private chapel. Some time passed and the servant came and found his master on his knees.

"Monsignor, will you not speak to that lady now?" he asked.

"Tell her to wait a little longer," was the reply.

The man retreated, to return more than once; Monsignor, still on his knees, always gave the same message,

POPE PIUS IX

and at last Baladelli, after the manner of old servants, lost his temper and exclaimed: "For goodness' sake, come and speak with that poor woman! She has been waiting for hours."

Then the Archbishop looked around at him and said, very quietly, "I speak with the living, not with the dead."

The frightened domestic rushed into the anteroom where the petitioner had been left, and beheld a tumbled heap on the floor. Calling his fellow-servants to help him, he raised it up. The heavy veil had slipped from the face. The "lady" was a man, with a great sharp knife concealed in his feminine garments. He was stone dead.

Monsignor Mastai was made a Cardinal (with the titular of the Church of St. Peter * and Marcellinus) on the 14th of December, 1840, to the great happiness of his mother, a widow since 1833. During her lifetime he made a point of going once or more every year to visit her at Sinigaglia in the old house where his childhood had been passed. He frequently was obliged to come to Rome on business, and so long as he was Archbishop of Spoleto, he lodged at the orphanage of Tata Giovanni on these occasions. That was no longer possible after he had been promoted to the more important See of Imola, as he was then expected to travel with a larger suite, for whom the Orphanage did not provide fitting quarters. He resented the expense of these more ostentatious journeys, complaining that the money they cost would have been better spent among his poor at Imola, but he had no choice in the matter and had to submit to custom and tradition.

A very unpleasant adventure marked the third year

* St. Peter the exorcist, martyred with the Priest Marcellinus, under Diocletian. His name occurs in the Canon of the Mass.

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

of his cardinalate. In the heat of the summer he and two of his colleagues in the Sacred College arranged to take a few weeks of rest in a small and lonely villa in a remote part of the country. They knew, of course, that the revolutionary agents were abroad and at work, but it had not occurred to any of the trio that their own illustrious persons might be designated as worthy objects of attack. But a certain Riotti, a Piedmontese, deep-dyed in conspiracy, conceived the brilliant idea of kidnapping the three prelates and holding them as hostages, to be ransomed at the price of his own immunity should his treasonable designs be discovered. So, in the dead of night this hero, with six of his fellow-conspirators, broke into the villa, and the unfortunate prelates were roused from their sleep to find themselves confronted with a band of desperate men armed to the teeth. The two other Cardinals were not fighters, but Giovanni Maria Mastai was. What weapons he used I know not — he had none at hand except his high courage and biting tongue, but the outcome was that the ruffians fled from his presence and were heard of no more. His companions said that it was entirely owing to his bravery that the whole party was saved.

One spring day at Imola, while the Carnival was roaring through the streets, the Archbishop was down on his knees in the Church praying for his people that they might not sin in their mirth. Alas! even his fervent prayers could not altogether avert that calamity! A sudden tumult of cries and footsteps came from the sacristy and he rushed thither to almost fall over a young man, who lay gasping in his blood on the pavement. At the same moment his pursuers broke in after him, three men with knives in their hands, furiously intent on finishing

POPE PIUS IX

their victim. The Cardinal instantly placed himself before him and, holding up the gold cross which he wore on his breast, forbade them to come a step nearer. In a torrent of burning eloquence he reproached them with their atrocious cruelty and sacrilege of which they had been guilty, and ordered them to quit the Church. They stood for a moment cowed and broken, then they fled, and he turned to the poor boy on the ground. Very tenderly he knelt down beside him, and soothed and comforted him, pillowng his bleeding neck on his arm, while the attendants who had arrived on the scene ran for a physician. The latter came promptly, but said that the wound was mortal — there was nothing to be done. Then, still kneeling on the ground and holding the poor dying boy in his arms, the Cardinal helped him to make his confession, called one of the priests of the Church to administer the last Sacraments, and knelt there till the young soul passed away, comforted and at peace.

Where injuries or insults were offered to himself, Cardinal Mastai forgave as only the Saints can forgive. The chief magistrate of Imola, a hard and cruel man, had conceived the most bitter hatred of him for his gentle methods and broad, progressive views, and expressed his hostility with much violence. The Mayor's wife, a good devout woman, was much distressed at his attitude, and sought by every means in her power to heal the one-sided feud. A child was born to her, and she secretly begged the Cardinal to volunteer to be its godfather — she was sure her husband's heart would be softened at such an evidence of condescension and good-will! Nothing loath, the good Cardinal approached the Mayor, personally, and with much gentleness and humility asked if he would permit him to stand sponsor for the baby. Whereupon

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

the Mayor flew into a passion and exclaimed: "You! You presume to suggest such a thing! You, who are a friend of malcontents and rebels! No, indeed! You are too liberal for me!" Then he turned his back on his Archbishop and left him — a suppliant refused!

The Archbishop accepted both the insult and the calumny without a word of protest. A month later he changed his name and assumed that of Pius IX. Learning that his old enemy was in Rome with his family at the time, he sent him word that, although he had refused to allow the Archbishop of Imola to stand godfather to his child, he might not feel the same objection to the Pope, who, if the infant were not yet baptised, would be glad to be its sponsor. *En passant* one is struck with wonder that, amid all the preoccupation and inevitable excitement of that great change in his life, Pius IX should have found time to think of the man at all. Naturally, he had conquered, and his old enemy could scarcely express his gratitude at receiving such an honour. Even then the Pope remembered him again, and very soon afterwards seized an opportunity of conferring on him a great material benefit. That is how the Saints forgive!

Naturally he had conquered, and the favour was received with almost unbelieving joy.

Oh, they were a good family, those Mastai-Ferrettis. After the accession of Pius IX, his brother, Cardinal Ferretti, a most wise and saintly man, acted as his Prime Minister for a time, before the revolution. His memory was greatly venerated in Rieti, of which place he was Cardinal Bishop. A terrible thing happened while he was there. One of the Churches was broken into at night, the Tabernacle violated, and the pyx containing the Blessed Sacrament stolen. On learning of this frightful

POPE PIUS IX

sacrilege the next morning, the Cardinal called all his clergy together, and he and they, with bare feet and ropes round their necks, went in procession to the public square. The entire population gathered round them, and then the Cardinal, standing bareheaded and barefooted under the noonday sun, preached a sermon, taking for his text the cry of Mary Magdalene on Easter morning: "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him."

When the sermon ended the people were kneeling on the stones, sobbing like children. That night the door of the Church was left open, and the pyx was restored; its sacred contents were intact.

Pius IX early let his family know that they were to expect neither wealth nor promotion from his hands. One ambitious relation asked him for a title. "You have not the income to maintain it, my dear fellow," the Pope replied, "and I shall not provide you with one. Stay as you are." Another, a young nephew, was idling about Rome, giving himself no end of airs because his uncle was on the throne. His uncle sent him back to Sinigaglia to learn sense in obscurity. Yet the poorest and meanest could always obtain aid and sympathy from Pius IX. I remember seeing the people push forward their written petitions as he used to drive through the city or walk in the environs. The queer, often dirty, scraps of paper were received by one of the Cardinals or the chamberlain who accompanied the Pope on these occasions, and every one was examined, the circumstances verified, and genuine cases relieved within twenty-four hours. Only one class dreaded the approach of the Holy Father — neglectful or fraudulent officials. He relied on no reports of public or private institutions, but de-

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

scended on them at all hours of the day or night, in person and without giving the slightest warning, to see for himself how things were being managed. Like Haroun-al-Raschid he would slip out alone, dressed as a layman, and dive unrecognised into hospitals, schools, and prisons, only revealing his rank when he could not obtain admittance otherwise; and where he found anything out of order, correction, and in serious cases heavy retribution, instantly followed. One night, dressed as a private gentleman, he was thus going through the wards of the great Hospital of Santo Spirito, where, as in most of the Roman hospitals, charitable visitors were always free to come and cheer or tend the sick. That night a poor French artist was dying, and he called for a priest. The attendants looked everywhere for the Almoner or Chaplain of the Institution, but he was not to be found. The Pope said, "I will take his place," and to him the dying man made his confession, from him received the last Sacraments, and passed away, comforted and in peace. The next morning the Almoner was dismissed.

One day the Holy Father, walking in the Quirinal Gardens, passed a sentry on duty. The man silently held out a loaf of bread for his inspection. Pius IX took it, examined it, and asked one question, "Do you always get bread as bad as this?" "Always, Santo Padre," was the reply. A sudden descent on the Commissariat department showed that he had spoken the truth. When the sun rose again the cheating commissary was repenting of his sins in prison. There is a beautifully practical side to autocratic government!

Justice had nothing to blush for in the Rome of those days, and the poor could obtain it as promptly and easily as the rich. There were three separate institutions de-

POPE PIUS IX

voted entirely to the legal defence and protection of persons who could not pay for the services of a lawyer. One was the Arch-Confraternity of St. Ives, thus named after the Saint still so dear to the people of Brittany, the lawyer who was a priest and who devoted all his talents to the defence and protection of the poor. But long before his time (he died on the 19th of May, 1303) St. Gregory had instituted in Rome seven official defenders of the poor, one for each Region of the city. They were called "defensori"; some eight hundred years later their official descendants, the College of Procurators, took the title of "the Rights of the Poor," and there was also a civil office established by Urban VIII, of which the holder, who had to be a noble and a layman, took the title of "Advocate of the Poor," exercising his powers in cases that came outside any ecclesiastical administration. The Congregation of St. Ives remained the great standby of the lower classes down to my own time. It was partly a religious sodality, comprising both prelates and lawyers, who met every Sunday for pious exercises, which were followed by a careful examination of such appeals as had been laid before them during the week. They took up all just and genuine claims and defended them at their own expense. Besides looking after the rights of their humble fellow-countrymen, they undertook the cases of all poor strangers who got into trouble in the city.

There was a third body, the Arch-Confraternity of San Girolamo, that devoted itself to the defence and aid of prisoners and, more especially, of poor widows. The gentlemen composing it — and they were the flower of the aristocracy, ecclesiastical and social — made it their business to assist impecunious prisoners in every possible

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

way, paying their fines, if such had been imposed on them, and arranging matters with their creditors if they had been imprisoned for debt. The members had free access to all the prisons and they took their duties very seriously, some of their number examining the food every day of the year, and enquiring into all matters connected with the treatment of the prisoners. Indeed some of the most important prisons were confided to their sole charge. They did no end of good, particularly in bringing about amicable settlements of disputes which would otherwise have caused fierce litigation.

Our blessed Pius IX had a tender sympathy for poor debtors and often came to their assistance. He was constantly in money difficulties himself — as generous people so often are — during the earlier part of his career. When he became Archbishop of Spoleto he had to borrow a goodly sum, on his brother's security, from a Roman money-lender to defray the expenses of his installation, and he was so recklessly charitable that again and again there was not wherewithal to buy food.

His old housekeeper at Spoleto used to weep over the bare shelves of her larder — everybody was fed, she declared, except her master and his household! It was hoped that things would be better when he moved to Imola, where the Episcopal revenue was double that of Spoleto, but the master's ways were hopeless and he only laughed when his people remonstrated with him. There came a day at Imola when the distracted steward, ready to tear his hair, exclaimed: "Eminenza, there was a hundred dollars in the treasury this morning, and *it is all gone!* I have not a cent for the 'spese'" (the current expenses); "what shall we do?"

The Cardinal reminded him that the good God had

POPE PIUS IX

promised daily bread to His children. "That is true, Eminenza," said the poor man, "but—I am in terrible difficulty, all the same!"

"Well," said his master, "to-morrow is a fast day. I know you have some cheese in the house. Serve that for dinner."

"But the next day, Eminenza?"

"Oh, I will take care to leave enough for the next day!" was the Cardinal's reply.

On another occasion he was about to entertain a distinguished party at dinner. The gentlemen were already gathered in the drawing-room when their host was informed that a man wished to speak with him on urgent business. He excused himself and came into the dining-room, where he found one of his parishioners in frantic distress. He wanted a loan to save him from immediate bankruptcy. "I have not a single dollar in my possession, my poor friend," said the Cardinal, "but—" He glanced round the room, where all his best plate was laid out in preparation for the coming feast, and pounced on a great gold soup tureen, a cherished gift from his mother. "Take this," he said, putting it into the man's hands, "it will pay your debts."

With sublime carelessness he returned to his guests, and they and he soon began to wonder why dinner was not served. A long time passed, and then the steward, pale as death and with tears in his eyes, came and informed him that somebody had stolen the gold soup tureen! He had looked everywhere, searched the servants' rooms — the household was in an uproar — but the tureen was gone!

"Oh, is that all?" he laughed. "I stole it myself! Get the old china one and let us eat."

CHAPTER VII

CAPTIVITY OF POPE PIUS VII

Lebzeltern, the Ambassador of the Austrian Emperor—Origin of His Mission—Napoleon's Anger Against Pius VII—Ariest of the Pope—Protests from the Church—Napoleon Excommunicated—Vain Efforts to Evade the Bull—Instructions for the Mission—“Do All, or Else, *Do Nothing*”—Pius VII in His Sixty-eighth Year—The Interview—The Pope's Position—His Generosity—Message to Napoleon—Continued Captivity—Return to Rome—Napoleon's Expiation.

ONE beautiful evening of early summer in the year 1810, the packet-boat plying between Genoa and Savona reached the latter port after a fair but exciting passage; for, albeit the sea was scarcely ruffled by the breeze — which in itself was barely sufficient to fill the sails — yet during the whole of the voyage from Genoa a couple of British frigates had accompanied the packet-boat, keeping however, much to the surprise of the voyagers, at a considerable distance and without manifesting any hostile intention. And when, at last, the packet-boat was safe at anchor in the harbour of Savona, the frigates likewise lay to, within about a cannon-shot of the land, and began, apparently, to make all snug for the night.

Among the passengers who now walked down the gang-plank of the packet-boat on to the quay, thankful for once to British eccentricity for its unaccountable generosity in letting them go their way unmolested, was a man, still young, with an expression of imperturbable good-nature not unmixed with a certain bland shrewdness. This person, after directing a servant, by whom he was accompanied, to have his baggage taken to an hotel —

CAPTIVITY OF POPE PIUS VII

possibly the “Roma”— betook himself alone and on foot to the “Vescovado,” the palace of the Bishop of Savona, “a fairly large house,” as Napoleon had described it in a letter in which he had attempted to excuse himself for the choice of it as a residence for his prisoner, Pope Pius VII.

The traveller, on arriving at the door of the Vescovado, found his further way barred by a couple of gendarmes who were mounting guard there; to them, on their asking his business, he replied that he desired an interview with the Sovereign Pontiff, and requested that they would let him pass. For all answer they stared at him, open-mouthed, taking him for an eccentric; when their commander, a Colonel Thévenot, who chanced to be passing, took the matter out of their hands.

“Who are you, sir, and what do you want?” he enquired.

“I wish to see the Holy Father, as soon as possible,” replied the other. “Allow me”— handing the Colonel a visiting card inscribed:

“LE CHEVALIER DE LEBZELTERN,
Conseiller d’Ambassade
de
Sa Majesté l’Empereur d’Autriche et Roi
Apostolique de Hongrie.”

Having read the card, Thévenot glanced suspiciously at the owner of it; then, seeing that he had indeed to do with a serious person, he turned rather red in the face.

“Tut-tut, my dear sir, surely you cannot expect to obtain admission to the Pope in this rough-and-ready way,” he stammered. “It is really quite out of the ques-

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

tion, you know," with a wave of the hand to where, in the courtyard, a corporal's guard of fusiliers was preparing to relieve the sentries posted in all the approaches of the building.

"Ah, the guard of honour, I suppose, for His Holiness," returned the Austrian, with the vestige of a smile; whereat Colonel Thévenot's equanimity gave way.

"Frankly, sir," he broke out, "please understand that no living being is allowed to enter here without a written order from General Berthier, the commandant of the town."

"Frankly, sir," retorted Lebzeltern in his turn, "that does not apply to myself, and I am going to enter."

Happily for all concerned, the situation was dispelled at that moment by the sound of heavy firing from the direction of the harbour, where the British frigates had suddenly come in closer towards the town in the intention of ascertaining the range of the French artillery, especially of some large cannon on a new fort. The orders of Napoleon himself, who was acquainted with this custom of the British, were positive in regard to such provocations; and it was strictly enjoined upon his officers to take no notice of them except in the event of a serious attack. Nevertheless, the garrison of Savona lost its head upon this particular occasion and opened an extensive fire upon the two inquisitive ships. As Lebzeltern described it:

"It was a splendid sight; the weather was superb, the sea like a mirror, the whole coast, as well as the English ships, being turned to gold in the sunset. On the side of Savona thundered the cannon, their smoke shot with

CAPTIVITY OF POPE PIUS VII

flame; from the English, though, there came no sound except that of their bands playing their well-known air of, 'Go to bed, go to bed, and get up as quickly as you can!'"

In the confusion of what the French imagined to be the preliminaries of an action, the gates of the Vescovado were closed, and Lebzeltern, thus forced to abandon his quest for the moment, turned his footsteps towards the hotel. There was nothing for it, as he saw, but to obtain General Berthier's permission to see the Pope, with whom alone his mission to Savona was concerned. Having dined, therefore, he despatched a messenger to the Papal "maestro di camera," Monsignor Doria, bearing a letter from Count Metternich, the Austrian Ambassador in Paris, under whose instructions he was acting, together with a formal request for an audience of the Holy Father.

Some explanation is necessary of the origin of Lebzeltern's mission to Savona; and so I trust the reader will not take it amiss if I venture upon the attempt.

When, in the summer of 1809, Napoleon sent orders to Rome for the arrest of the Pope, he did so under the impulse of one of those blind rages of his which upset all the calculations of his wisest advisers, and which only ended in raising up insurmountable barriers in the way of his ultimate triumph. For years he had been angered by the Pope's refusal either to close the ports of the Papal States against English ships and merchandise, or to expel the English residents in his dominions. In answer to the Emperor's repeated demands, Pius VII had said that, as the Universal Spiritual Father of all the Christian family, he absolutely refused to close their

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

home and his (*i.e.*, the Papal States) against his English children. Whereupon, in 1807, Benevento and Pontecorvo were taken from the Papal States and erected into French Duchies for Talleyrand and Bernadotte, to be held by them as fiefs of the Empire. The next year, Rome itself was occupied by French troops, and the "legations" of Ancona, Urbino, Macerata, and Camerino seized by Napoleon's orders; and, in 1809, the Eternal City was declared to be annexed to the Empire as the capital of the French département or county of Rome. Finally, in the night of July 5-6, 1809, Pope Pius VII was arrested by General Radet and taken as a prisoner to Savona.

Napoleon's idea, in thus imprisoning the Pontiff and isolating him from his accustomed friends, counsellors, and surroundings, was to wring from him by suffering that compliance with the imperial diplomacy which the good old man had hitherto refused so uncompromisingly. To be sure, now that Rome and the Papal States were in the hands of his soldiers, the Emperor had no difficulty either in expelling or arresting the English residing there, or in closing the whole of Romagna to British merchandise; but, in his haste and anger, he had reckoned without the religious difficulties of the new situation.

To begin with, in thus laying violent hands upon the person of the Pope, he struck a blow not only at a fellow-Sovereign, but at the Head of the Catholic Church on earth; and, in so doing, wounded the whole of the Church in its tenderest feelings, stirring up against himself a resentment that knew no bounds, not only in France, Belgium, and Italy, but, also, in Spain and Austria; as well as throughout the Catholic parts of Germany and the Netherlands. Protests multiplied on every hand, becom-

CAPTIVITY OF POPE PIUS VII

ing increasingly violent, until Napoleon was forced to admit to himself that he had made a terrible mistake, and that his glory and power were insufficient to seduce the souls of men from their religious allegiance to the successor of St. Peter. Moreover, the dangers and discomforts of his situation were rendered intolerable by a Bull of Excommunication issued against him in that summer of 1809, in the tour of his triumph over the Austrians at Wagram; which Bull was served upon him in person, whilst surrounded by his marshals, by a solitary ecclesiastic who, true to his mission, did not honour him with any kind of salutation, but merely delivered the parchment into the Emperor's hand, turned his back upon him, and walked away. Napoleon, indeed, feigned to make light of the excommunication, asking of those about him whether the Pope expected the muskets to fall from the hands of his, the Emperor's, soldiers; but, in his heart, he was greatly troubled. He had known for some time that such a Bull was on its way to him, but had contrived to evade the service of it on him. For Lebzeltern, himself, who was Secretary of the Austrian Embassy in Rome at the period of the Holy Father's arrest, and who had long been a valued and intimate friend of Pius VII, had been entrusted with another such document at his departure from Rome on an order transmitted to him from Napoleon through General de Miollis, ordering him (albeit a foreign diplomatist) to quit French territory immediately. Bearing with him, therefore, the Bull of Excommunication, Lebzeltern had departed from Rome, being escorted on his way to Vienna as far as Klagenfurt in Styria by a French officer. On reaching Schönbrunn, however, he was arrested by the French military police; his baggage and, even, his person was

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

submitted to a degrading search, and, at length, every other means of purloining the Bull having been tried in vain, Lebzeltern was threatened with being shot unless he gave up the document — for Napoleon would appear to have entertained a superstition that, if only he could escape from having the Bull served on him, its effect would be annulled! But nothing would induce Lebzeltern to reveal its hiding-place; and so he was sent off as a state prisoner to Munich, with a special recommendation to the Bavarian Government to treat him as harshly as possible. Having passed some months there, however, he was exchanged against a Baron d'Arétin, and came to Vienna, believing himself to be free at last; but now Wagram had been fought, and Napoleon was master there; and Lebzeltern was again arrested on a trumped-up charge of seeking to escape from giving satisfaction to a French officer in an affair of honour! Nor would Napoleon let him go until compelled to do so by the insistent demands of Metternich, who was just then negotiating the peace preliminaries at Altenburg. At long length, however, Lebzeltern was released, and joined the Austrian headquarters near Schönbrunn a few days before the signing of the treaty of Vienna; and it was he to whom Emperor Francis unburdened himself with tears in his eyes on the subject of the Treaty.

Soon afterwards, Lebzeltern went to Paris as Secretary of Embassy under Metternich; and when, in the late spring of 1810, Napoleon asked Metternich to find him a man to entrust with the errand of persuading the Holy Father to accede to his views (*i.e.*, the removal of the Excommunication and the abdication of the Temporal Power in favour of the Napoleonic dynasty), Metternich recommended Lebzeltern as the one person qualified to

CAPTIVITY OF POPE PIUS VII

speak to the Pope with any chance of being accorded a favourable hearing.

The whole hinge of the matter was the Pope's renunciation of the Temporal Power; only in return for which would Napoleon (as he made perfectly clear to Metternich) allow the Pontiff to return to Rome, whence, alone, it was possible for Pius VII to direct the way of the Catholic Church. And, unless the Pope would surrender the patrimony of Peter, he should never see Rome again; and the Emperor would nominate another Pontiff in his stead. The position was certainly simple enough, according to Napoleon.

But Metternich had added, in private, a little word of his own in the ear of his estimable subordinate on the eve of the latter's departure for Italy. "Do all," said he, with a peculiar emphasis, "or else, *do nothing*." And Lebzeltern, grasping the significance of the words, had bowed, smilingly, before withdrawing to prepare for the journey. He perfectly understood; what Metternich meant was that he was either to effect "in toto" what both of them knew to be impossible or else he was to effect nothing at all. That is to say, he was not to attempt any compromise by which the Pope might be hoodwinked into doing what Napoleon wanted; for it was perfectly certain that Pius VII would refuse to meet the Emperor's views as laid down by the Emperor himself for transmission by Lebzeltern. And, as Metternich realised, the salvation, not only of Austria but of all Europe, depended upon the Pope's holding out against Napoleon; for the only thing that must inevitably, sooner or later, bring about the Emperor's downfall, was the sense of their outraged religion in the hearts of the vanquished.

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

After sending in his request for an audience to Monsignor Doria, Lebzeltern went to call upon General Berthier, who was the commandant of Savona and the Pope's gaoler. Berthier had heard of his arrival, and began by telling Lebzeltern — who had told him that the object of his mission was to discuss some Austrian religious business with the Holy Father — that he could only be allowed to converse with Pius VII in the presence of witnesses. To this Lebzeltern replied that it was impossible for him to speak freely of the affairs of the Austrian Court in the presence of any third party whomsoever; that, according to Napoleon himself, the Pope was under no kind of restraint; and, lastly, that Napoleon both knew and approved of his, Lebzeltern's, mission. But it was not until Lebzeltern threatened to go back to Paris immediately and to complain of the obstacle placed in his path that Berthier finally surrendered the point — albeit not without a violent scene in which he complained bitterly of the Emperor for placing him (as was true enough) in so equivocal a position by first forbidding him to allow any one to have access to the Pope without direct orders to do so from Paris, and then sending Lebzeltern thus (underhandedly and without as much as a line from any French official excepting a passport) to match, as it were, his, Berthier's, intelligence against his obedience. Finally, he himself decided to give the preference to his intelligence.

So it was all of four days after his arrival at Savona that Lebzeltern was ushered by Monsignor Doria into the Pope's presence.

At that time, Pius VII, although in his sixty-eighth year, looked considerably younger, his hair being still jet-black and abundant, and his dark eyes full of life and

CAPTIVITY OF POPE PIUS VII

light. The smile, too, which rarely left his pale, kindly face, was peculiarly winsome in its frankness and its serenity. The only signs about him of what he had endured of late at the hands of the French administration were a weariness in his voice and a marked stoop like that of a very old or very tired man. On seeing Lebzeltern, though, he showed a greater animation and pleasure than he had done for many months; especially was he delighted to learn that their interview was to be an absolutely private one — for this he regarded as a great indulgence on the part of his gaolers, it being the first time in his captivity (then nearly a year old) that he had been allowed to speak with any except in the presence of a third party.

At first, records Lebzeltern, the Holy Father spoke of his sufferings in the journey from Rome and of all he had endured since being torn from the Eternal City; also, he expressed his sympathies for his visitor in what the latter had undergone of unjust imprisonment at the hands of the French and the Bavarians. In return * Lebzeltern, as he tells himself, gave the Pontiff an outline of public events since their last meeting in Rome, prior to the battle of Wagram — the Treaty of Vienna and its results; the progress of the war in Portugal; and the marriage of Napoleon to the Archduchess Marie-Louise. *All of which events Lebzeltern, a professional diplomatist and an Austrian official, believed to be hitherto unknown to the Pope* — wherein lies one of the most curious points of modern history. For, if Pope Pius VII was supposed, even by such men as Metternich and Lebzeltern, to be still, in May, 1810, in ignorance of the marriage of Napoleon to Marie-Louise, how can it be claimed that

* "Le Pape Pie VII à Savone," p. 83. H. Chatard. Plon, Nourrit et Cie. (Paris, 1887.)

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

the Supreme Pontiff's sanction had ever been given to that marriage? Apparently to Lebzeltern's surprise, Pius VII had, however, actually learned of the imperial marriage through some secret channel: ". . . outwitting the watchfulness of his gaolers, he received news day by day . . . !" For, amongst other indignities, no letters were ever permitted to reach or issue from the Holy Father except such as had been approved by Berthier and by a certain Chabrol, Prefect of the "département" of Montenotte, by whom the Papal correspondence was always read and censored; so that it was evidently Napoleon's purpose to keep his august prisoner in total ignorance of the majority of the world's events.

Nevertheless, Pius VII spoke with no bitterness, but only with great grief of the French Emperor, expressing the most sorrowful tenderness towards the man whom he had crowned Emperor at Notre Dame a few years previously. And all he asked was that he might be allowed to go back to Rome in order to be able to do his duty by the Church as her Pastor.

At this point Lebzeltern made known the real object of his coming to Savona: namely, that Napoleon was anxious to come to an understanding with the Pope. To the latter this was, indeed, a most welcome surprise; but, almost immediately, he seemed to realise that he was suddenly in the presence of some sort of insidious temptation which was preparing to attack him. And here Lebzeltern, by turning the talk during some minutes to Austrian affairs, sought to give his listener time in which to recover from the first effects of his surprise. And so, for a while, they spoke of the dangers of a schism that threatened the German episcopate, so long deprived by Napoleon of the guidance of their Shepherd. And then,

CAPTIVITY OF POPE PIUS VII

as the Pope began more clearly to divine the probable intentions of the Emperor towards him, he reverted to the subject of his captor:

“I want nothing for myself,” he said, by way of warning Lebzeltern that it would be of no use for him to offer any personal advantage to the Pope (as such) as the price of a reconciliation with Napoleon. “I am old, and have no need of anything; I have sacrificed all I had to my duty. I have nothing left to lose. Therefore, no personal consideration can make me turn aside from the narrow road along which the sacred voice of my conscience has so far led me. I want no pension; the alms of the faithful will suffice me. . . . All I insist upon — and with all my strength — is that I be allowed free communication with the Bishops and the faithful.” Once, too, he seemed uncertain of even the diplomatist’s own intentions towards him. “At Rome, my dear Lebzeltern,” he reminded him, “I opened my heart to you in the conviction that you were incapable of abusing my confidence . . .”— speaking rapidly in Italian.

And now, as Lebzeltern felt, the moment had come when he could no longer defer the revelation of what it was that Napoleon proposed to the Pope as the only possible basis of an agreement between them — that is to say, the only price he would accept to let Pius VII out of prison. It was by no means easy, as he gives one to understand, for the young Austrian to do this thing; but, at length, he forced himself to the point. After assuring the Holy Father once more of his own devotion to him, as well as of that of Metternich and the Emperor Francis, Lebzeltern proceeded to explain that Napoleon had in no way abated his desire to be the lord of Rome, which had long been one of the principal objects

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

of his ambition; also, that he had in no way changed his mind in regard to the Pope's surrender of the Temporal Power; and that, although Napoleon would not insist upon a formal deed of renunciation on the part of Pius VII, yet, at the same time, he must insist that the Pope should maintain an attitude of absolute submission in the matter, an attitude which should in no way recall the past political position of the Papacy, and which at bottom should be, in fact, an acknowledgment of the suzerainty of the French Emperor.

The words were scarcely out of Lebzeltern's mouth when the Pontiff took him up with an amazing energy for so delicate a man.

"Is not Napoleon already, *de facto*, the master of Rome?" he demanded. "Does he not parcel out my States as he pleases? Do not his troops already hold my ports, camp in my capital, and live at my expense? And all I can do is to oppose a few protests to his armed force. But I know him; he is a man who never really wants what he says he wants — and what he really wants he will never admit to a living soul beforehand."

To which Lebzeltern, in order to restore the Pope's equanimity, replied by telling him how Metternich, in speaking to Napoleon, had declared himself openly on the side of the Holy Father; and, moreover, had emphatically impressed upon the Emperor the unchangeable principles * of the Austrian Government in regard to the Catholic Church and its visible spiritual Head on earth.

"I should indeed be grateful for any help that Austria could give me," said the Pope. "All I ask is that Napoleon will let me go back to Rome and that he will

* "*Unchangeable principles*,"— unchangeable, that is to say, until, of course, 1870, since when—!

CAPTIVITY OF POPE PIUS VII

allow me to keep about me a sufficient number of people for the business of consistories and councils — and that my relations with the faithful may be free and unhampered. I have no means of compelling Napoleon to restore the dominions of which he has robbed me — very well, all I can do is to protest. Beyond that I can do nothing."

Here Lebzelter, it must be recorded, made some attempt to persuade the Holy Father to make what he called "sacrifices" in the interests of the distracted Church — but of what nature, precisely, he did not specify. But Pius VII, reading his mind, replied that the duty imposed upon him by his conscience of defending the rights of the Holy See and the patrimony of the Church — which patrimony he was bound by his oath as Pope to transmit intact, in so far as in him lay, to his successors — forbade his remaining silent under Napoleon's iniquity: his silence would be understood, by his enemies, to be a tacit abdication of the Temporal Power, and would be considered by the faithful as a cowardly surrender.

From this point in the conversation the two men understood each other's position and standpoint clearly — and yet, both did their best to avoid the blind-alley into which the talk was surely leading them.

"Let Napoleon only allow me to return to Rome," pleaded the Pope — "the Catacombs will be enough for me, they have served as a shelter before now for other Pontiffs. . . . As to my sustenance, as I said before, the faithful will take care of it. No doubt Napoleon would offer me a revenue from the funds of the religious orders he has suppressed — in the same way that, when I went to Paris to crown him, he offered me some

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

eighteen or twenty million francs of such stolen money — an unspeakable suggestion which I refused with horror and indignation! But, indeed, now that I think of it — how could I possibly hold my tongue as he proposes I should do, and not protest, while he would go on suppressing convents and religious orders under my very eyes, as well as introducing innovations that I could not pass over in silence without becoming his accomplice in the face of all Christendom? ”

In response Lebzeltern submitted that, possibly, Napoleon’s malevolent dispositions towards the Church might be beneficially affected by the removal of the ban of excommunication under which he still lay.

“ But Napoleon would be excommunicated without any Bull of mine,” replied the other. “ For he is, *ipso facto*, as a persecutor of the Church, outside her pale. Even if I had never issued any such ban against him, he would still be excommunicated by his own acts.”

Lebzeltern now proposed that the Holy Father should write a letter to Napoleon, demanding with all gentleness and moderation to be set at liberty and allowed to resume his apostolic functions. “ I would even ask his help to that end,” pursued the Austrian, “ and I would publish the letter. Such a letter would in no way disparage the Vicar of Christ, ever ready to forgive sinners; and, at the same time, it would place Napoleon in an exceedingly embarrassing situation before the world. By so doing, your Holiness would infallibly destroy at a single blow those weapons of calumny which he is employing against you, and which he means to go on employing.”

“ Listen, Lebzeltern. You know that I am willing to concede all that it is possible to concede; but where

CAPTIVITY OF POPE PIUS VII

my conscience is concerned, you behold me perfectly resigned to remain as I am, a prisoner. If my captivity were a thousand times harsher — if I had, even, to mount the scaffold — I should not deviate by so much as a hair's breadth from what my duty demands of me. And it would be an unworthy betrayal of that duty if I were to remove the ban of excommunication from Napoleon without good and sufficient reason. As to the letter you propose that I should write to him — a kind of encyclical, as it were — frankly I feel that, in sending such a thing to a man like Napoleon, who is capable of changing the wording of it, and then of publishing it to my detriment and his own ends, I should do wrong in taking so grave a risk without first consulting the Sacred College."

And, on Lebzeltern's arguing that it was the Pope's duty to make the first move towards a reconciliation with the Emperor, Pius VII was silent for a moment, as though deliberating upon his next words. At last he spoke again :

" If Napoleon shows a desire to become reconciled to the Church, and if he will prove his sincerity by some deed, the thing can be arranged — and I assure you that no one is more desirous of it than I."

And with that the first interview came to an end. Lebzeltern did not see the Pontiff again until two days later; on May 18, he found him in a condition of great fatigue from overwork (as may easily be understood when one remembers that *the entire business of the Church had fallen upon the shoulders of the venerable Pontiff, deprived by Napoleon's orders of assistance of any kind* in the transaction of that stupendous task!) and having before him a letter recently received from Cardinal Fesch. In this letter the Cardinal had written of the Emperor's intention — unless an agreement were

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

speedily come to between himself and the Holy Father — of settling the question by choosing Bishops that would do his will from among the French clergy, Bishops who would administer their dioceses in accordance with Napoleon's instructions alone and without any reference to the Pope. In answer, the Holy Father had condescended to write back to the Cardinal to say that the Emperor was evidently bent upon making impossible any reconciliation between them; and that any Episcopal Council that the Emperor might call together upon his own initiative would be absolutely null and void. Nevertheless, he, the Pope, being unwilling to refuse any chance of reconciliation, the Cardinal was to exhort Napoleon upon the subject; to assure him of his glory in this world and in the next if he would but sincerely become reconciled to the Church; and, equally, to threaten him with condign punishment upon himself and his dynasty, if he should persist in his persecution of the Church.

Lebzeltern now had to recognise that the Sovereign Pontiff had, in his heart, lost all confidence in Napoleon's good intentions; for Pius VII now spoke of yet further pains and penalties that he had not made use of and which were still at his disposal. Lebzeltern, though, undiscouraged, only tried the harder to incline the Pope towards an understanding with the Emperor.

"If Napoleon will do something in favour of the Church, then, and not before, will I withdraw my excommunication of him," replied the Pontiff. "To gain absolution, one must do penance——"

"Surely, Holy Father — but, generally speaking, the absolution precedes the penance" — a specious argument, this, of the diplomatist, seeing that the fruit of the absolution is dependent upon the performance of the penance.

CAPTIVITY OF POPE PIUS VII

All preliminaries being exhausted, it only remained for Lebzeltern to disclose the absolutely last possible basis of an understanding between the Pope and the Emperor.

“If the Emperor were willing to forego any formal act of abdication of the Temporal Power on the part of your Holiness,” he ventured, “might he count in return upon your absolute silence as to the past?”—By which Lebzeltern meant that the Pope should by his silence give a tacit sanction to all the things that Napoleon had done to the Church and her ministers—his imprisonment of the Pope and many of the Cardinals, his sequestration of countless Church moneys, his closing of the multitudes of religious houses, and his throwing of their occupants, destitute and homeless, upon the world.

“Out of the question,” said the Pope. “I could never feel sure of any pact with Napoleon.” Presently, however, he added: “The guarantee, though, of a third party to any treaty I might make with him would certainly ease my mind considerably—especially if Austria would furnish the guarantee.” And then, in an access of reconciliation, he continued: “I have already told you what I would be disposed to do on my side towards healing the breach between Napoleon and the Church. What more does he want of me? Does he wish me to recognise him as Emperor of the West? Very well, I am willing to do so. Does he wish me to crown him as such at Rome? Very well, again I am quite ready to do so. For that would not in any way be contrary to my conscience, provided only that he makes his peace with the Church and ceases from persecuting her; but I insist upon it that he shall respect her earthly Head in that Head’s unchangeable capacity as the spiritual chief of Christendom!”

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

Lebzeltern was, indeed, astounded at the Pope's generosity.

"Most Holy Father," he stammered, "you have given too much not to give just one little thing more — merely to allow your subjects to obey the present Government in the Papal States, and to order them expressly to do so."

There followed a gesture of such pain on the part of the Sovereign Pontiff, expressing so eloquently his repugnance to this proposal, that Lebzeltern was penetrated with a shaft of regret for having made it. Moreover, as he says himself, "I trembled at the thought of all I had obtained from him!"

At the same time, Lebzeltern felt convinced of the uselessness of the Pope's concessions. He knew that Napoleon, unless he could obtain the one thing on which his heart was set — the actual sovereignty of the Papal States, and that with the Pope's consent and blessing, — would not for a moment consider anything else that might be offered him instead.

So Lebzeltern parted from the Holy Father for that day, his heart full of indefinable misgivings for the dark future in which the power of Napoleon loomed so vast and menacing, and in which there was no great light visible to him of the Church, save only here and there, so to speak, where the feeble red glow of a few distant, wide-scattered sanctuary-lamps starred the mirk of the new Europe.

On May 20, Lebzeltern went for the last time to the Vescovado, to take leave of the august prisoner within its walls.

On this last occasion of their meeting at Savona, the diplomatist found Pius VII in a very strange frame of mind. Not by any means inclined to withdraw the con-

CAPTIVITY OF POPE PIUS VII

cessions he had made in the previous interview with Lebzeltern, but only regretting them bitterly; hoping they might not satisfy Napoleon and so be rejected by him. On Lebzeltern's presenting for his consideration a written outline of the concessions in question, the Pontiff, after considering them a little while, rose suddenly from his chair and spoke as follows:

“ I have made known to you, Lebzeltern, many of my most secret thoughts and sentiments which I would never have entrusted to another living man except my confessor; and I do not regret it, because I am perfectly certain that you will never abuse the confidence I have placed in you. Nevertheless, please bear in mind that I only authorise you to report of me to Napoleon and Metternich what I am now going to tell you, and which is just what you yourself have seen and heard — that I am perfectly resigned to God’s Will regarding me and that I humbly place my cause in His hands. Say that no consideration of any kind shall induce me to disobey my conscience and the Divine law. Tell them that I am calm and serene, and that all I ask of the Emperor — for whom I only hope and pray that he may be granted the grace to make his peace with our holy mother the Church — is that he will allow me the means of communicating freely with the faithful, and that he will no longer deprive them of the services of their father and servant. Tell the Emperor that I entreat him to remember that the glory of this world is in itself no passport to Heaven; that, albeit I yearn with all my heart to be reconciled with him, yet, that I will never be so at the price of my conscience. Assure him very earnestly that I have not the smallest personal feeling against him; that I forgive him with my whole heart all that he has done to me; and that nothing could hurt me more than that he should imagine me capable of harbouring resentments — which in themselves are forbidden by God and have no place either in my heart or in my inclination.”

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

Presently, among other things, he went on to speak of the private misgivings with which Napoleon's character inspired him: "Between ourselves, Lebzeltern, I am convinced that Napoleon is not in good faith when he says that he wishes to become reconciled with me. . . . If only he would let me have some one here, at Savona, to help me in my work, which is really and truly overwhelming; moreover, there is a vast amount of specialist and technical business which I cannot possibly transact by myself without consulting my expert advisers. And, to make matters worse for me, my health and my eyesight are giving out; I do not feel that I shall be able to carry my burden of solitary labour very much longer; besides, it is bad for my temper, which I confess, frankly, I often have great difficulty in curbing."

Nor is there anything wonderful in this when one remembers the Pope's situation after being imprisoned nearly a year in the house of the Bishop of Savona, shut off from the Cardinals (of whom the only news he had was that they had been imprisoned and maltreated in French fortresses by order of Napoleon) and from the faithful. Alone with his doubts and difficulties and age and ill-health; and the insidious temptations put before him by the Emperor's instruments (conscious, some of these, as was Fesch; unconscious, again, as was Lebzeltern)—what is there astonishing or blamable in this "great difficulty" so well and simply confessed by the most benignantly human Barnabo Chiaramonte?

Presently he spoke again, to utter a final warning to Napoleon:

"If Napoleon continues to make war upon religion (even although he does so under the guise of extending to it his hypocritical perfidious protection); if he attempts

CAPTIVITY OF POPE PIUS VII

to have me dragged to Paris; if he goes on spreading the lie of my sacrificing the real interests of the Church to secondary matters and to worldly motives; if he persists in forcing me to more active reprisals, then — I shall have to use the last weapons that remain to me and which would make a stir in the world that he does not yet dream of. The only regret I should have in that case would be that some others — who have been less unkind to me than he — might suffer, too. As to the precise nature of those weapons, it is possible that their effect might be very different from anything you could imagine. But, make your mind easy; have no fear that I shall employ them unless I am absolutely obliged to do so. Do not be afraid of my doing anything precipitately, for I pray constantly for grace and strength sufficient to enable me to carry my cross patiently. But if you only knew the unvarying torment of my nights as well as of my days, Lebzeltern — the unceasing anguish of my solitude — you would not wonder at what must sometimes appear to you incomprehensible inconsistencies in my attitude towards many things — as must have been noticeable in the talks between us!"

And with that he dismissed Lebzeltern, who was as much moved as he; for they now shared the same conviction of the utter emptiness of Napoleon's professions of a desire for reconciliation.

And, as it proved, the doors of Savona did not open for Pius VII until the next year, 1811 — and then only to allow of his deportation to another prison at Fontainebleau, where he was to remain until Napoleon's downfall. Once only did the Sovereign Pontiff weaken (with none but the purest of good intentions) when, in 1813, he consented, for a moment, to renounce the Temporal Power, in order that he might be allowed to go back to Rome, thence to direct the Church. But in vain, for Napoleon

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

would not let him out of his hands, and Pius VII, perceiving the mistake he had made, announced to all whom it might concern his resumption of the inalienable dominions and Temporal Sovereignty of the Popes. And, in 1814, he returned to his rightful throne in the Vatican amid the rejoicings of his subjects.

But what must have been his reflections in regard to his oppressor during the five years (the exact duration of Napoleon's crime against him) that were consumed in the terrific expiation of St. Helena? And his awe and amazement at the stupendous vindication of his trust in the providence of Heaven? — for, as the Italian saying has it, "God does not pay wages day by day, but only on Saturdays — and then He pays in full with interest!"

Pius VII's own revenge on Napoleon took the form of offering safe and honoured homes, and the means to live, to his mother and his entire family after his downfall. Whereby many descendants of the Bonapartes are counted among the Roman nobles at this day.

CHAPTER VIII

IN SABINA

Castel Gandolfo—Its Gardens—The Sabine Hills—The Reverendo—An Expedition into the Hills—The Campagna in the Early Morning—“Our Lady of Good Counsel”—Ancient Præneste—Italy’s Landscape—Struggles of the Colonna—Destruction of Palestrina—Boniface’s Revenge and Expiation—Olevano, the Haunt of Artists—“Picturesque Utility”—The Wrong Train—Romance of a Pebble—The Work of the Saints.

WE had chosen Castel Gandolfo for our summer quarters and had spent two delightful months in the Villa Brazzà, situated on the lower edge of the town, which climbed up the gentle slope behind, and having for ourselves the open view of all the Campagna below us, before. The house did not look large from the road, but very little of it showed itself to the road at all. When one had passed under the arched “portone,” one found a great rambling residence with a long terraced wing stretching down into the garden, and in the garden itself pavilions, grottoes, terraces, all bowered in flowers and so artistically disposed that every one seemed isolated and only approached by long winding walks delightfully shady and green. Where the chief sitting-room opened towards the garden there was a small terrace, completely shaded from the morning sun, with a fountain so disposed that it fell all down one wall like a waterfall, and round it clambered and waved the wreaths of a hundred creepers, ivy and stephanotis and jessamine and maidenhair fern, all wet and blooming in the gentle moisture of its spray. To the left the wing, in which my

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

own rooms were situated, ran far down, affording shade and coolness; a stairway led up to its roof, where vast beds of petunias gave out their sweet perfume and were visited every evening at sunset by humming-bird moths, who fed on the honey in the white and purple chalices till they could scarcely fly away.

The house had been full of guests through July and August and the summer had been divinely bright and cool. Through it all I had looked, day after day, over towards the Sabine Hills, so remote and mysterious for all their nearness to Rome, and a great desire was upon me to penetrate into those blue fastnesses. They had been friends — at a distance — all my life, since I could remember anything, and probably before that, for the big eastern window of the room where I was born looked straight towards them, and doubtless their sun-smitten peaks were the first outside objects my eyes ever beheld. They are our Sibyls, in Rome. They reflect every change of sun and wind, and very early I learnt to tell the signs of the coming weather which they infallibly gave us.

I made up my mind to reach them at last, and with some difficulty persuaded my brother and my stepfather to come with me. We were joined by a friend, an elderly English clergyman, much loved by us and always known as the “Reverendo.” He came of exceedingly well-known people, but was a younger son with no money — and no encumbrances, and he had long amused us with his quaint ways. He was rather elderly, very tall, with a paganly handsome head — and a quiet way of saying incredible things that made me love him much, and work him hard, for I was a rather spoilt young person in those days and allowed myself unlimited whims, which my blessed family helped me to carry out in the most ex-

IN SABINA

emplary way. I always had a very tender spot for the "Reverendo," and it became something uncomfortably near pity when I heard, from our servants, of certain straits to which he was put in order to appear properly at the little gatherings to which we were always inviting him. He lived a long way from our house, and his means quite forbade the luxury of cabs, so in all weathers he came on foot. The carefully turned-up evening trousers could be kept out of the mud, but not so the shoes below; so the Reverendo brought clean ones — and evening socks — with him. The porter's lodge was just inside the *porte cochère*, and he would turn in there, regardless of what the inhabitants might be doing, sit down, pull off the condemned foot-gear, toss it into various corners, put on the clean things, and walk upstairs — all without a single word to the porter's wife and children, who put him down, quite smilingly, as another "mad Englishman." When the function upstairs was over he would reappear, change once more, and depart, always in perfect silence. But one evening Mrs. Porter told my maid she could have wept for the poor gentleman! He came in as usual, sat down and pulled off boots and socks, flung them away, and then discovered that he had forgotten to bring fresh ones. Quite meekly he gathered up the muddy articles, put them on, and disappeared into the night, to return, nearly an hour later, with his forgotten properties and go through the whole ceremony over again.

Like so many quiet, cultivated Englishmen whom circumstances more than taste have landed in the "Establishment" for life, he had the social instinct very strongly developed, loved bright society, and never refused an invitation. He caught gladly at the idea of riding through Sabina with us, and I knew that our expedition would be

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

a success, which it might not have been without the little spice of interest that an outsider always brings into an otherwise too strictly family party.

So, one divine September morning we four rode forth, my dear mother almost crying at our temerity in facing the brigands who were then supposed to haunt the Eastern Hills. "Do bring back your ears with you!" was her parting recommendation, and I know that during the days of our absence she constantly dreaded receiving the grim packet of severed ears which the old-time brigands were in the habit of sending, with their little account for ransom, to the relatives of those they had captured. Years before, when we children were making expeditions from Rocca di Papa, we had, to our immense joy, been provided with big formidable-looking toy pistols, which we were enjoined to carry "in evidence"—so that the report might go about that the party was always strongly armed! The only brigand we ever caught sight of in our rambles through the lonely country would be an occasional outlaw who had escaped from the police to take hiding in the woods (where he was charitably maintained by his sympathising fellow-townsfolk) and who would scuttle away like a startled hare at the approach of a big party of young foreigners whose yells would probably reach to Rome itself if anybody interfered with them. The brigand of Romagna is, or was, a poor creature, very easily disposed of; his cousin in Calabria or Sicily is quite a different kind of person, a resolute, unscrupulous gentleman whom it is not at all pleasant to meet.

In one of his Roman books, Mr. Hare speaks of the unearthly beauty of the Campagna and its surrounding hills in the first moments of the dawn, and deplores the

IN SABINA

fact that so many travellers come and go away again without ever having risen early enough to see it. I think dear Mr. Hare made the discovery late in life himself, for, if I remember rightly, it was during a journey of exploration that we made together somewhere that the fact struck him — and I and my sister regarded him then as distinctly middle-aged. My poor Annie was always a late riser, and vehemently deprecated the unripe hours of the morning, as she did every other kind of discomfort; but to me they were hours of purest romance, and seldom have they seemed more perfect than on the day when I and my three cavaliers rode away from Castel Gandolfo through the woods towards Genazzano (not Genzano) where we were to halt on our way to Palestrina.

Have you ever ridden through deep chestnut woods when the sun is still so low that it only strikes the under branches of the trees, and creeps up their trunks like a rising bath of gold? When every dell is still a mist of cool emerald, and on the banks the level beams are kissing open the tightly whorled fronds of the fern, filling the tiny cups of the moss with topaz wine and turning its million-feathered spikelets into an upstanding frieze of fairy spears, each strung with a yellow pearl?

Where some stream has cut its way deep through the rich soil, the forget-me-nots have grown so high and thick that they almost meet across the water; their blue is too dreamy yet to reflect the sky; they look up to that with the calm unseeing innocence of a newborn child that as yet knows not day from night. Ah, look well then, for later in the day the jealous treetops will take all the light to themselves, and every lovely detail, below, only visible in that first fleeting hour, will be lost in the deep forest

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

shadow that is neither light nor darkness, but all one quivering mysterious green.

We four rode through the woods silently, drinking in the crystal freshness of the air; and then, almost before we knew it, we were out in a blaze of heat, leaving the Alban Hills behind and crossing the plain that divides them from the Sabines, one of the old roads to Naples. In that first week of September it was like an unroofed hot-house, vines and corn and pomegranates crowding against each other till one would hardly have known where to get in the shears or the sickle; the dust from our horses' feet rose in golden clouds as we went along, and everywhere was the whirr of wings and the long droning note of the cicala. We were glad enough to reach Genazzano and pause in the shade before the old Church; but we had had some difficulty in penetrating so far, the Piazza and every street leading to it being full of peasants, who had come in from all the surrounding district to pay their respects to the Madonna del Buon Consiglio, on this the 8th of September, our Blessed Lady's birthday. Of course the greatest concourse takes place here on April the 25th, the especial feast of Our Lady of Good Counsel, but the people are always glad to repair to this famous sanctuary, and on the day we visited it the little town was full of the brilliant costumes which one very rarely sees now. The picture round which so much devotion centres is a very sweet one, rather Byzantine in character, as is natural, for it came to Italy from the other side of the Adriatic — miraculously transported, probably at the time when all that country came under Moslem rule. It was thus that the Holy House of Loreto, when the Holy places of Jerusalem fell into the hands of the Turks, was carried by the

IN SABINA

Angels to Christian shores, and thence to Italy, the dwellers near its last Eastern resting-place mourning despairingly round the deserted spot from which it disappeared between dark and dawn on the night of the 9th of December, 1294. I am writing of Genazzano and not of Loreto just now, but I must pause to remark that this miracle of the transportation of the house of the Blessed Virgin is far more clearly attested than many events in our own modern history; yet there are people, who would stake their lives on the truth of those events, who dismiss the miracle of Loreto with a smile of incredulity.

This picture of Our Lady of Good Counsel would not interest them. Yet I would advise even such persons to go and have a look at the beautiful copy of it in St. John Lateran's. It is quite small, a half length or less; the Blessed Mother holds the Child in her arms, and he is reaching up to whisper in her ear; she listens, with her heart in her deep sweet eyes, and the "counsel" is stored up for the children who appeal to her in their perplexities. There is an exquisite expression of confidence and familiarity on both the celestial Faces. Our Holy Father Pius X has such a great devotion to Our Lady of Good Counsel that, as all Catholics know, he has added the invocation "Mater Boni Consilii, ora pro nobis," to the Litany of the Blessed Virgin.

From Genazzano we went on to Palestrina, arriving there in time to go and watch the sunset from the ruined terraces of the Temple of Fortune. The place has passed from hand to hand, used as a fortress at one time and another since the fourth century before Christ; but to me its interest never lay in those comparatively modern developments. It is the story of times lost in the mist of ages, when those first cyclopean blocks were fitted to-

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

gether without the aid of cement — when a race, whose only traces are these mute huge stones that suggest all and tell nothing, lived and fortified itself on this outpost of the mountains — that is the story that I want to hear. There at Palestrina, when the sun was sinking into the level gold of the sea — forty miles away, but so clear and calm — I leaned over the stone bulwark, red in the sunset, hot to my hand (had it not baked in four or five thousand years of sunshine?), and felt that unearthly thrill of a revelation palpitatingly near, yet still withheld. It has come only a few times in my life — once at Torcello, once among the lost tombs of Etruria, there at Palestrina, and in the great hall of the unmarked sepulchre of the last Ming Emperor in Pechilia. That was modern, indeed, a Seventeenth Century affair, but the ancient spirit was there — something that brooded over a lonely, mighty country, unchanged, untampered with, before the beginnings of history.

At Palestrina — or to give the place its right name, Præneste — the Emperors were mere upstarts; Camillus, who took it and made it an appanage of Rome four hundred years or so before this time — Marius and Sulla, and the Roman ladies who had summer villas here and left those amazing “vanity boxes” (such arsenals of cosmetics and beautifiers as surprise even our modern beauty-artists) behind them — all these seem vulgar intruders on that sacredly ancient ground.

For, of all the cities of Romagna, Præneste has, I think, the most perfect situation. It seems to have grown out of the wall of the hills to watch over the southern roads to Rome. Before it the Campagna stretches away to the sea and to the north, the horizon there brokenly outlined by the low Volscian and Ciminian Hills. Not so

IN SABINA

towards the sea; in the near distance a castle or a single tower breaks the plain, midway Rome shimmers like a net of pearls thrown down across the Tiber; but the West is the empty West always, left to the sun and the wind, with the wide Heavens above and that one long sword of light laid on its further bound where the tideless Mediterranean laps against the shore. To the south, at an almost direct angle, rise the Alban Hills, near, familiar, friendly, with their symmetrical volcanic slopes so restful to the eye; where they sink to the plain farthest from Palestrina the Appian Way leads on to Naples, and that is the way most of the world travels; but the more beautiful road is the one which leads, right past the foot of the Sabines, through the level valley which separates them from the Alban range, to Anagni and Valmontone and Frosinone, following the classic Liris as it takes an almost straight course through the garden it has ploughed and watered. Seen from the Campagna, the Albans seem to be a range running east and west, thrown up to make a frame and background for Rome; but travel down the Liris and you will realise that all we see from Rome, Monte Cavo, and his lesser brethren, with their scores of white towns, is simply the culmination of a long branch of the Apeninnes, set up like a screen between the central range and the fever-haunted sea-board called Maremma. When about two-thirds of the distance to Naples is accomplished, the range rises in the isolated peak of Rocca Monfina to the height of nearly four thousand feet and becomes merged in the central Apeninnes once more. The railway runs through now, but it is still a wild, remote country, very feudal in its ways, with half-ruined castles on every point of vantage, scowling down on a land that needs them no

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

longer, where fighting has ceased, and the good soil that has had its way for centuries has brought forth those stores of corn and wine and oil which seem to be South Italy's inalienable dower.

From Palestrina, looking down on that September evening, the bursting richness of it all seemed almost incredible. Right at the foot of the hills a deep, abandoned watercourse was a golden river of standing corn, bordered far on either side with dense greenery fringing off into vineyards so teeming with fruit that, seen from above, it was like a great mantle of dark amethyst patterned here and there, where the white grapes grew, with jade. The woody slopes of the Sabines sank into the rich carpet, and rose, away to the north, in stormy outlines, now softened into dreamy rose and lilac, against the clear evening sky. As the sun sank, even the cold silver of the olive trees, standing tier above tier on their shallow terraces, took on the flush, as if bathed in wine, and the darker foliage of oak and chestnut burned with sombre yet vivid intensity. Then the sun touched the sea — lingered, a ball of living crimson, for an instant, and plunged out of sight. One star hung its newborn silver against the paling west; another and another answered it, till all the dying blue overhead was pierced and patterned with the faint sparklets in their eternal dance. Then from behind the wall of peaks a broad fan of misty silver was thrown up against the sky, growing, spreading, washing purple and crimson to one untinted sheen; another moment, and the harvest moon heaved a golden shoulder over the crags, rolled up, rounded itself, and hung, a great honey-coloured globe, flooding the hills and the Campagna and the distant sea with calm, all-embracing effulgence.

IN SABINA

At the time of my first visit to Palestrina I was still sufficiently attracted by the Middle Ages to find much romance in the struggles of the Colonnas and their contemporaries, struggles which dragged the harrow over the vast Temple of Fortune — reputed the biggest in the world,— threw its stones one upon another, and left the place merely a beautiful tomb. Since then, I confess, my interest has died away. I can feel no sympathy with the noble cut-throats — Sciarras, Colonnas, Orsinis — whose deeds are written in blood over every page of the time. I used to weep over the sufferings they inflicted on Boniface VIII, but, apart from the outrage on his sacred office, which can never be condoned, one cannot help feeling that he deserved something of what he got, and that, in spite of his high courage and notable intellect, he had treated those his enemies very basely and cruelly. His election in 1217 had been bitterly opposed by two Colonna Cardinals — Giacomo and Pietro — who were furious at the thought that the Papal chair should be filled by one of the Gaetonis of Anagni, the hereditary rivals and enemies of their own family. The election went through, in spite of them, and they, fearing the new Pope's wrath, fled to Palestrina, taking every member of the family with them. This was an open declaration of war, and the Pope realised that there would be no peace for his realm till they were subdued. With truly mediæval promptitude, he at once confiscated all their estates and called on all good Christians to take up arms against them. Their other strongholds fell one by one into his hands, but Palestrina, with its tremendous defences and commanding position, resisted every attack of the besiegers. It seemed impregnable. Then Pope Boniface remembered that the most victorious and ruthless leader

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

of the day, Guido de Montefeltro, was down on his knees in a convent at Ancona, praying to be forgiven some of his deeds of blood before death should call him to judgment. He commanded him to leave his retreat and come to give his advice as to the reduction of Palestrina. Very unwillingly the old soldier obeyed, and returned to that world which he had left just in time to save his wicked soul. He went and looked at the Colonna fortress, examined the defences with the eye of an expert, and returned to the Pope, who was at Rieti. He told him that there was no hope of taking Palestrina by force of arms. "What, then, am I to do?" cried Boniface. Guido knew, but was unwilling to say. The Pope insisted on his giving his opinion, and the crafty old fighter proffered the counsel for which Dante with some justice put him in Malebolge — "Prometter lungo e tenere corto!" "Promise much — fulfil little," it would run in English.

Boniface instantly acted on the advice. The Colonnas were promised full forgiveness. They thought it wise to accept and submit. In all the habiliments of mourning repentance they issued from the stronghold they were never to see again, and came in a body to Rieti. The Pope received them, pronounced their crimes against himself forgiven, and kept them at Rieti as his guests. But prudence, as he apprehended it, forbade that he should leave that eyrie and refuge of rebellion standing for them to fly to the next time they picked a quarrel with him. So, while they were sunning themselves in his favour in the mountain city of the South, he secretly despatched a faithful friend, Ranieri, the Bishop of Pisa, to wipe Palestrina off the face of the earth. Nothing was to be spared, except the Cathedral. And very thoroughly did Ranieri

IN SABINA

do his work. Every vestige of the fortress and palace and the big town which had grown up with them was destroyed—"a plough was driven over the ruins, the ground was sown with salt, and even the famous marble staircase of a hundred steps, up which people could ride their horses into the palace," was swept away.

Then the Colonnas, landless, homeless, penniless, understood how much the Pope's forgiveness was worth, and they fled from his domains to nurse their wrongs and wait for revenge.

That came in good, or rather very evil, time, and Boniface paid in full during the awful days at Anagni, days so dreadful that one quarrels with Dante for not regarding them as sufficient expiation for the harassed Pontiff's one great sin. He was driven into a quarrel with Philippe le Bel, the King of France, and Sciarra Colonna, the Head of the proscribed House, caught at the chance and offered his services to the French. In company with their leader, William de Nogaret, he broke into Anagni, Boniface's own city where he had taken refuge, and, but for the opposition of Nogaret, he would, apparently, have murdered his great enemy on the spot.

Here Boniface showed all the valour of his race and place. He prepared to meet death with the dignity of a priest and the courage of a soldier. "If I am to die, I will die like a Pope," he said. Every friend, every Cardinal and chaplain and courtier fled as the shout of "A Colonna, a Colonna!" rose from the lower streets of the mountain town. Not a soul was left in the palace but the Pope. He put on his pontifical vestments, placed the tiara on his head, and mounted his throne, where he sat like a statue, awaiting certain death. Colonna and

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

Nogaret, with three hundred steel-clad men at their heels, clanked into the hall, and stood dumb for a moment at the sight of their great enemy, who neither spoke nor moved. Then they rushed upon him and Sciarra Colonna assailed him with a fiery torrent of abuse, his anger feeding on itself till it ran through him like a flame, and he struck the Pontiff on the face with his mailed hand. Nogaret protested — Boniface said no word. He meant to suffer for his sins in silence, because so had the Redeemer suffered for sins not His. They dragged the Pope from his throne, hustled him out into the Square, all black with the gaping, cowardly crowd of his own subjects, put him on a vicious horse with his face to the tail, and led him with outbursts of derision through the streets. Not a hand was raised to defend him, not a protest was heard. Then his conquerors brought him back to his palace and locked him up, without food or drink, for three miserable days, during which they sacked not only the palace, but every house in the town, riding away at last glutted with plunder, destroying what they could not carry off, and leaving literally nothing but bare walls behind them. Then, all danger being past, Boniface's loving subjects bethought themselves of letting him out. They found him fainting from exhaustion, crying like a starved child for a morsel of bread and a cup of water. The women wept over him then, and ran to minister to his wants; not so much as a water-jar had been left in the palace, and they emptied their bronze concas into a wooden chest. Boniface died soon after, in Rome, broken-hearted, and the carnival of anarchy in high places, with its raging hate and its fury of bloodshed, went on for many a long year afterwards.

‘ Truly, mediæval history makes depressing reading!

IN SABINA

How gladly the mind reverts from it to the dawn of the centuries, when men fought for their cities and their wives and children, but not for mere hatred of their kind. And what a relief it is to turn from the endless carnage of the later Middle Ages to the history that is not written in blood and that charms and dominates us still, the history of strange holy lives every pulse of which was an act of love to God and mankind. It is but a step from one to the other — from Boniface VIII and the Colonnas and the Orsinis to Benedict and Scholastica — from smitten Palestrina to cloistered Subiaco behind it in the hills.

On the way thither one stopped for a day in Olevano, to me the least Italian, the most completely "foreignised" spot in all that country. It has been for so many years the haunt of artists of every nationality that it has none left of its own. Its beauty there is no denying; it laughs in sunshine and prosperity, and for that, in these bad times, one is grateful to it. But it is no more Italian than a fine piece of staging at the Haymarket. The background is perfect, and the inhabitants are healthy and handsome, but the moment they see a traveller coming they throw themselves into paintable attitudes; all naturalness seems gone; everything and everybody is harnessed to the service of picturesque utility. The famous inn, about which Gregorovius and Mr. Hare raved so enthusiastically, resounds with Northern tongues and with that ear-splitting affliction known as German Italian. The walls are a visitors' book, of untold price, where almost every notable artist of the last hundred years has left his signature in sketch or portrait. At every turn you are tripped up by easels, wet canvases, and artists' umbrellas, and in the evening the beer flows freely and the jolly

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

brotherhood talks about itself at the top of its German voice, till Italy — our shy, melancholy Italy — fades into the background, and a weary traveller trying to sleep, in one of the bedrooms which all open out of the central dining-room, is led to believe that he has taken the wrong train and been transported unawares to the scene of a “Kneipe” in Munich or Dresden.

Talking about “wrong trains” reminds me of an absurd incident that happened in England. A wayfarer who had taken a little more than was good for him wandered into Victoria Station, having quite forgotten the name of the place he wished to make for. But he could remember what it was *not*. Into every train that came along he climbed — and then asked the guard for what point it was bound. None of the answers satisfied him and he tumbled out on the platform again and again, wailing, “Wrong train! wrong train!” At last, however, he struck the right one, the guard’s answer to his query brought back the memory of his domicile, and, much relieved, he sank down against the cushions and began to smoke. At the first station on the road a clergyman got into the compartment, and the train steamed on. Harder and harder the reverend gentleman stared at his companion, who showed all too plainly the evidences of his spree. Pretty soon, just as they were pulling into another station, the Christian’s conscience bade him admonish his erring brother.

“My friend,” he began in solemn tones, “do you know where you are going to?” The overtaken one was all attention at once, and his monitor went on, “You are going *straight to Hell!*”

“Oh, Lord!” moaned the sinner on the opposite seat. “Wrong train *again!*” And he sprang out of the car-

IN SABINA

riage and stood weeping on the platform while his one chance of getting home sped away from him into the night.

We were little troubled by railways in the Sabines in my young days; such innovations had not ever been contemplated, and all our travelling was done on horses or mules. It was rather a long ride from Olevano to Subiaco and I was very tired and stiff when our little party straggled into the road leading up to the town. But — what is youth without some impossible romance? My “romance” had marched that way the year before, with his company of Zouaves, condemned to garrison duty for three dreary months in the hills; and *this* (“parents, do you think you know your children?”) was the utterly idiotic motive which had made me drag my three unsuspecting men to Subiaco! I wanted to pick up a stone that had been touched by the adored one’s foot! Very gingerly I climbed down off my weary beast, selected a fine smooth pebble from the side of the road where I knew my idol must have passed, and, with much difficulty, scrambled up again. The pebble was afterwards polished, cut, and set in Etruscan gold, as a pendant, marked with a mystic inscription signifying a challenge to fate to lessen the ardour of my attachment; and when I found it among my trinkets, long years after my real fate had found and claimed me, I could have wept for the delicious rainbow-tinted sorrows of first youth!

But the treasure once secured, and the luxury of tears reserved for some future unoccupied moment, I gave myself up to the magic of the consecrated cleft in the hills, and, in spite of my own profound ignorance in those days, in spite of the sceptical attitude of my Presbyterian stepfather and the Anglican Reverendo, and my dear

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

Marion's bubbling fun and laughter — for he was a mere boy then, of the most irrepressible kind — the "Sacro Speco" made a profound impression on me.

It was as if a door leading out of some gay ballroom, all lights and flowers and dance music, had suddenly been opened and I had passed through it from the things of time to those of eternity. Fifteen hundred years were wiped out — I saw St. Benedict, the "beloved, called from the cleft in the rock," praying, rejoicing, hiding from men to be alone with God. And that seems to me the most wonderful thing in the lives of the great Founders — they had not at first the smallest forethought of their mission. They only knew that they must save their souls in fear and trembling, and in blind humility they withdrew from all occasions of sin and prayed for purification. It forms a curious contrast to the life led by most of us who consider ourselves pretty decent Christians in the eyes of the world. *Our* question is, "How much pleasure and amusement can I get in without actually falling into mortal sin?" and many a dangerous permission we grant ourselves or wring from our unwilling directors, that refused would have prevented, or at least delayed, a hundred falls. It is so terribly easy to do what all the rest are doing — to go and see the problem play, read the interesting bad book, pay the visit at the country house where the old admirer will meet us and spread the old snares for our destruction and his own! We know all about it; it has happened so often; but we go ahead, telling our hearts the lie they know so well: "Oh, it doesn't matter! I know just where to stop!" Steeped in affection to sin — with, at the best, ages of Purgatory awaiting us — we add every straw we can gather to our already huge burden and imagine we can lay it down

IN SABINA

with a good deathbed confession and slip into Paradise with the best!

Very different was the point of view of the great Saints. For one who was converted late in life, we read of scores to whom Perfection called in the very dawn of reason; and it is precisely these, who never committed a mortal sin in their lives, who were most severe with themselves — most nervous, as we should say — about their final salvation.

Their sight, never clouded by any consent to evil, saw even in the most trifling failings a heinous offence against the Divine Majesty, and Its infinite Purity, visible to them, made their own fallen nature black by contrast. So they took that nature in hand, these athletes (called Benedict, and Francis, and Anthony, and many another blessed name written in the “Libro d’Oro” of the recording Angel), and thought a lifetime would not be too much to give to the task of subduing it. And the Heavenly Father bade them go on and be of good courage; and never, till the predestined moment came, did He let them dream that their years of prayer and fasting were just a preparation for generalship in His army, that in humbly striving to save their own souls they were fitting themselves to save millions and millions of others. The first symptom one notices about them is their complete disregard of the natty little idol we call “respectability”— the Church calls it “human respect.” We quite understand that great men should kick it out of the way— whoever heard of Wellington or Kitchener asking, “What are people going to say?” Their gifts and their calling place them above the reach of considerations by which we ordinary mortals are content to regulate our actions. We admire, rave over, their splendid carelessness. But

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

when it comes to the Saints we take our shrunken measure, try to fit it to their conduct, and shake our heads. Their whole-heartedness is eccentricity, they thought nothing of inflicting most damaging shocks on public opinion — what a pity! And if we see any of our acquaintances beginning to follow in their steps we look the other way, as if the poor dears had come out into the street half dressed. I wonder how many of her friends cared to bow to the late Countess of Denbigh when, a few years ago, she took Bridget's place at the crossing near Farm Street and swept it diligently, and stretched out her blessed hand for the pennies, and never thought she was doing anything heroic — just keeping old Bridget's crossing for her while she went to Mass! I believe the very Angels wanted to throw down their shining mantles for her to walk over when she went to Heaven — but I am sure some of her friends on earth thought she was putting them in a most embarrassing position.

Lady Georgiana Fullerton, in her "Life of Santa Francesca Romana," has described very truly and sympathetically these — to us — puzzling stages in the development of saintship. They vary in degree, of course, in each individual case, but the same note runs through all: "Permission to labour first,— the result far distant, but clear; the vision of that result when once He had said, 'Begin and work.' To tarry patiently for that signal, to obey it unhesitatingly when once given, is the rule of the Saints. How marvellous is their instinct! how accordant their practice! First, the hidden life, the common life; the silence of the house of Nazareth; the carpenter's shop; the marriage-feast, it may be, for some; and, at last, 'the hour is come,' and the true work for

IN SABINA

which they are sent into the world has to be done, in the desert or in the cloister, in the temple or in the market-place, on Mount Tabor or on Mount Calvary; and the martyr or the confessor, the founder or the reformer of a religious order, comes forth, and in an instant, or in a few years, performs a work at which earth wonders and angels rejoice."

CHAPTER IX

PEOPLE OF THE HILLS

The Apennines—View from a Peak—Real Hospitality—Polenta—Woods of Sabina—A Hill Family—The Cook—A Queer Adventure—People of the South—A Night Festival in the Abruzzi—The Journey—The Old Organ—Marion Crawford's Boys—Juvenile Theatricals.

HOW much our Italy of Rome and Naples owes to the Apennines! How gratefully should lovers of romance and history regard that mighty chain that runs, an inland sea of crag and peak, forest and ravine, between shore and shore! Physically and morally, it is the backbone of the country, the fortress of tradition, the nurse of what our modern cant calls, "Plain living and high thinking." Its hard, yet beneficent, climate, with sharp delimitations of season, its passes so obdurate to the tainting allurements of railways, its hundreds of sturdy, self-contained little towns, each with its story of its own saints and heroes, its ancestry of tradition that laughs at the flight of centuries—all this has bred a race of men and women of whom modern Italy knows little, but who form the residue by which the mixed enfeebled masses of her cities and plains will in the end be saved. Faith is strong; morals, though often transgressed, still clear and commanding. New fads, make-believe religions, free love and race suicide presented as twin benefits to humanity, the worship of materialism—all the old crimes that come dressed up as new virtues—find no foothold here. The "pale-pink uplift" of these modern shams would be laughed to scorn by our people of Sabina and

PEOPLE OF THE HILLS

Abruzzi and Ciociaria. Their parish priests tramp round amongst them as friends and mentors. The "parroco" and the apothecary may be the only persons in a whole community who can read, but the child of ten knows the commandments of God and the Church, and the innovator who attempts to make little of these meets with a very cold reception. The people have many faults and many weaknesses, but they are all human ones, and, frankly, I would rather have to do with the man who has slain a rival or a sweetheart in a fit of jealous anger than with a railway magnate or a prophet of the Decadent. The murderer's record is probably a good deal cleaner than theirs.

So my inheritance of Sabina has always been very precious to me. Many weary years have passed since I set foot there, but the remembrance of young days spent in those high rich solitudes comes still as a fresh breeze across the dusty wastes of the world, and very gladly shall I return to them before I die. I have travelled so far and seen such strange and endless varieties of scenery that I think I have a right to say that there are few places on earth where nature has done more to rejoice and strengthen the body and soul of man.

From Rome the Sabines are merely a noble chain of peaks, culminating in the calm Lion profile of the couchant "Lionessa," her face to the north, waiting through the long blue days of summer for the crown of snow that the winter lays on her brow. The slopes and spurs that descend towards the Campagna are smiling enough — as they should be, turned everlasting to the sun and the sea. One must pass beyond all that, climb by rough and narrow paths to the great tossed heart of the hills, and stand on some peak like Guadognolo to take in the

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

amazing grandeur of the Sabines. Even from lower places — Olevano, for instance — you may look east and west and south and north, and feel as if you were standing on an island crag in an ocean of long sapphire billows rolling away, breaker beyond breaker, into infinity, a sea that in some moment of surpassing pride raised its breast too near the sky and froze to stone in that passion of ambition; and your heart, the heart of the native-born, tells you that every hollow between the breakers holds its rivers and lakes smothered in olives and vines and corn, its walled town and ancient Church, its old fortified farmhouses, dazzlingly white against the sun-warmed rock of the mounting ridge — farmhouses with broad brick loggias garlanded with festoons of scarlet and orange, the bursting red “pepperoni” as big as citrons, and strings of flame-coloured maize like golden spear-heads, all drying in the sun for the winter’s needs.

Stop at one of these houses and ask for hospitality, and you will find out what the word really means. I have often thought of it when I was sitting through huge official dinners where the great ones of the earth were arranging its destinies over the champagne and truffles — with the murder of a nation in their hearts. The commanded smile, and the cold watchful eyes — the men fencing with words for rapiers, and we women watching every play of the shrouded steel and pretending to talk amiable nothings to each other; the gasp of relief at parting, and the consignment to everlasting perdition of the adversary, which broke from our worried mate when the door of the brougham had been clapped to and we could sink back on the cushions as we rolled away! Then would return a vision of some halt in the hills at home, of the dark cavernous kitchen with its freshly sprinkled brick

PEOPLE OF THE HILLS

floor and its bunches of herbs hanging from the high blackened beams overhead shedding their dry fragrance on the air, so cool and refreshing on entering from the burning midday sunshine outside. "Favorisca!" cries the "Sposa"—she may be eighteen or eighty, but that is her title from her wedding day forward—"Condescend to enter! Let the signori be accommodated!" The rush-bottomed chairs are set out on the loggia in the shade, the boys are sent to fetch ice-cool water from the well, and, as the bucket goes splashing down into the invisible flood and comes up all diamonds in the sun, "Sposa" brings out four or five heavy glasses, freshly rinsed, in the fingers of one hand and a straw-bound fiaschetta of her own wine in the other. "Vino sincero, signori miei!" she assures you as she sets it down on the deal table already spread with the clean cloth that smells of rosemary. Ay, a "sincere wine," with no "dope" in its crimson or topaz depths, and the welcome is as sincere as the wine. She pours it out, smiling, her handsome head and rich costume standing out pictur-esque against the dark doorway behind her, within which one of her girls is kneeling on the bricks, washing freshly pulled lettuce for your salad in a great copper bowl, hand-beaten and reflecting the light from every one of its red-bronze facets. Everything in the kitchen is of beaten copper; these people would as soon think of cooking in any other metal as of sleeping in cotton sheets—a degradation the poorest scorns to put up with.

"Sposa" disappears within the kitchen and one of the girls comes out to entertain the visitors while the dinner is cooking. She stands with one hand on the back of a chair, the other fingering her blue and yellow apron, pink with shyness, but devoured with curiosity. Every detail

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

of one's dress, every bit of jewellery is being taken in — to be described to all the other girls of the place when they meet at Church on Sunday — but she answers one's questions with a confident smile. How old? Oh, "in seventeen" — that is, sixteen last birthday. Her name? Candiduccia, at the Signora's service! Betrothed! A pinker flush and an indescribable little movement of the shoulders, and then down goes her head, while "Mammà," whose sharp ears have heard all, replies in her deep sonorous tones, from among the pots and pans: "A good youth, but he is getting a bad bargain! This lazy one has not spun half her linen yet. I had mine all spun and woven by the time I was fourteen! Here, thou! come and fetch the plates! The illustrious ones are hungry!"

Candiduccia dives into the kitchen, and a moment later your dinner is before you — a big dimpled omelet, trout from the stream fried in olive oil, and crisp salad in a big majolica bowl. Sposa cuts the fresh rough bread — first making the sign of the Cross over the loaf — and serves you cream cheese, made from goat's milk, instead of butter. Butter and cow's milk do not enter into the Sabina bill of fare; our mountain people do not care about these things, but it is a feast for the gods, all the same.

When the time comes to go, you give Sposa what you think right, and she takes it rather unwillingly, but very gratefully, and as you ride away she and her girls stand at the door and wave their hands and say, "La Madonna v'accompagni"; and the boys, young rascals, will race your horses to the foot of the hill or the turn in the road, knowing well that you will give them a few coppers for their very own as soon as you are out of sight of

PEOPLE OF THE HILLS

“Mammà,” who, you may be sure, will never hear of the transaction.

If one is an invited guest at some important farmhouse, an elaborate feast is prepared, and there are heartburnings if the guests do not eat heartily of everything. I remember once going with the Cavaletti to the “bene” of one of their tenants, for dinner — a really mediæval repast which staggered even my robust young appetite. It began with the “polentata,” a curious first course which is *de rigueur* in Sabina when guests of honour are being entertained. The chief table was already set out with a dozen kinds of fresh and dried fruits, “alicetti” (the tiny local sardines), smoked ham, and home-made liqueurs, all intended to stimulate the appetite. But before sitting down to that we were led to a small pine-wood table at one side of the room and requested to take our seats around it. Then the mistress of the house advanced with a huge cauldron of polenta, which, to my consternation, she poured out on the freshly scrubbed table-top, so deftly that it exactly covered the entire surface. I stared, wondering what was to happen next; but my companions took no notice of me, and the Marchese, whom his peasants adored — as did everybody else who knew him — leant back in his chair and discussed the condition of the game in the woods with “Sor Giacomo,” while the wife, a piece of new string in her hands, watched the polenta cool and fix to about the consistency of cream cheese. Then, suddenly leaning over my shoulder, she cut it swiftly across and across with the string in symmetrical divisions nearly a foot square, one for each person, solemnly handed us each a spoon, and, bowing gracefully, begged us to eat!

It was a searching preparation for a hearty meal!

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

On another occasion we were invited to dinner at the house of a country notable many miles away, but still connected with the Cavaletti domains. It was early autumn, and we had an enchanting ride in the bright cool morning through the deep woods, where the chestnut burrs came padding down on the moss with soft thuds as we passed, and here and there some delicate ash or birch was already flaming into orange with the first touch of the frost. They looked like torches alight in the forest. They are so deep and green, those woods of Sabina, rich with oak and chestnut, elm and beech, a fairyland of moss and fern below, a world of sun and shadow above! The flowers are very delicate, too, harebells like thin amethyst, and the dainty wild pansy that lifts her little startled head like a Louis XV beauty who has lost her way; and there are stars of Bethlehem, growing always apart and lonely, five white petals with a touch of greenish gold for a heart, swinging in the breeze on a long translucent stem; and wild strawberries — snowy flower and crimson berry springing side by side among the broad trefoil leaves; and wild garlic, a mass of spotless bloom, and magic elder with great posies of perfumed level rime; and fern so tall that one could lose oneself in it, seeking for the threaded turquoise of forget-me-nots that grow beneath; and thousands more, fragile, exquisite things blooming in the deep peace of the undergrowth, while far overhead the strong tree-tops laugh in the wind and take all the sun.

I remember how sorry I was when we left the woods behind that day and reached a tiny walled town with, of course, a Church, a piazza, a fountain, and one big house standing aggressively square to the street, a typical Italian house with as many windows as could possibly be put into it, all green-shuttered, and most of them balconied.

PEOPLE OF THE HILLS

That was all I saw, for as we drew rein at the entrance we were surrounded by the whole family, all grown-up men and women, who lifted us girls down from our saddles, took possession of all our belongings, and all but carried us up to a big cool room on the first floor, with many expressions of sympathy for our supposed fatigue after the long ride. I believe they thought us rather daring for venturing ourselves on the shaggy mountain ponies at all, for few Italian women in the country ever mount anything more frisky than a tried and sober donkey.

Having settled us on the “canapé”—a very large sofa covered with green and scarlet checks—and provided us with rosolio and cakes to keep us good, all the ladies disappeared together. The men were buzzing around the Marchese, who, like the lover of horses he was, insisted on seeing the animals housed and fed; then a kind of electric thrill ran through the house, the Signora and her daughters came to fetch us from the salone, and everybody moved towards the dining-room. I was a little surprised to see so few seats at the table, which was covered with every kind of dainty and very prettily arranged; but the matter was explained when it became evident that the ladies of the family were to wait upon us and their own men in approved feudal fashion. I say “ladies” advisedly, for these were people as far removed from the peasant class as they considered themselves from that of the Marchese. They had never worn the costume of the contadine; they belonged to the great respectable middle class, from which most of the professions are supplied; both men and women spoke without a trace of dialect, and their manners were perfect—but then, thank Heaven, Italy is the natural home of good manners! I shall never forget the gentle, unobtrusive sweetness of

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

those women, as they moved about in perfect silence, in their black Sunday frocks and little bits of ancient jewellery, attending to all our wants so carefully and deftly, but refusing to take any part in the conversation. That was not what was expected of them!

The long elaborate feast had gone from "ante-pasto" and vermouth right through to the sweets; my girl friend and I looked at each other questioningly. We were growing fidgetty and wondered who was to give the signal to rise, since we were the only women at the table — when, to our dismay and despair, the whole meal began all over again! Course after course, in regular sequence, we had to sit it through and pretend to taste the new varieties of fish, flesh, and fowl which came in a steady stream from the kitchen. It was like some crazy dream! I think we had sat at that table nearly four hours before we were invited to take our coffee in the salone. The sun was sinking then, and, to our intense relief, the Marchese announced that we must be moving or we should not reach home that night. The farewells were elaborate, and our gratitude for all the trouble the dear people had taken was very real; they packed a whole hamper of ancient Roman dainties for us to take along lest we should faint by the way; but our joy when we got into the open air, with our faces towards home, was inexpressible. As we entered the woods — less alluring in the dusk than in the fresh morning hours — a shadowy fourth joined our party, a smiling little man on a very small donkey. In two minutes the Marchese had made friends with him and called out to us in English: "Girls, think up some compliments! This is the man who cooked the dinner. They sent twenty miles for him — and he wants to know if you liked it!"

PEOPLE OF THE HILLS

A woman noted for the charm and variety of her entertainments once said to me: "I do try to give respectable parties, but somehow they always turn into school feasts!" I am afraid the same kind of thing happens to me in regard to serious subjects. With the best intentions in the world I start to tell the story of some great person who has kindled my admiration — and in the middle of the tale the sun strikes on my page — a child laughs across the street — or some old refrain comes lilting to my ears, and farewell to the historic train of thought! My hero or saint recedes into the shadows and relinquishes the canvas to a thousand amiable little sprites of memory, who hold it till they have frisked through the very last step of their dance!

I do not know why, on this sunny July morning, there should rise before me a picture of a dark old house in the steep street of a Sabina town, where we drew rein after a long day's ride to ask for rooms. The night was falling, there was no inn in the place, and somebody had told us that perhaps the people here would take us in. Our party was that with which I left Castel Gandolfo some chapters ago — my stepfather, Marion, and the Hon. and Rev. G—— C——, who had already several times saved my life by stopping my runaway steed, a wall-eyed old crock given to me because he looked so reassuringly tame. He was quiet enough at that moment; we were both stiff and tired; and I slid to the ground, resolved not to go a step further, whatever the people of the house should say. The padrona came down and looked us over critically. Yes, she could take in the gentlemen if they would all sleep in one room, but it was impossible to receive the signorina — there was really nowhere to put her! I replied by walking into the house,

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

and sitting down on the first chair I could find, and defying her to turn me out. She stood and looked at me, considering. "Well," she said at last, "there *is* a room — it belongs to my little boy — perhaps he will not come home to-night. Yes, you may sleep there, Poverina! I see you are tired out."

She led me down a long twisting passage and threw open a door, holding the brass "lucerna" high to light me in. I saw a bed and a chair, and what I took to be a highly variegated wallpaper. "It will do beautifully," I said. "Tell the gentlemen that I don't want any supper — I am going straight to bed!"

"Buon riposo, bella mia!" (A good rest, my beautiful!) she replied, and shutting the door tramped away till her footsteps were lost in the distance. Then I looked round. "What a funny room for a little boy!" I thought. Guns and hunting knives hung on racks all about, and what I had thought was wallpaper turned out to be a gigantic collection of the pictures off the French match-boxes, which had just begun to find their way into our part of the world, and which were not admitted into our house because they were so improper. The little boy had covered the walls with them from top to bottom! Well, it was none of my business, and I prepared to lie down and forget them, but when I went to lock the door I found that it had no key and would hardly close at all. Fatigue, however, got the better of nervousness — it was a respectable house, after all.

I was almost ready to get into bed, when a heavy step came along the passage, accompanied by the cheerful whistling of an old opera air. I sprang up, too late to prevent the door being thrown wide open — and found myself staring at a tall young man in town clothes and

PEOPLE OF THE HILLS

a red tie, who jumped back as if he had been shot. I screamed—he swore—and then we both broke into peals of laughter. As soon as he could get his breath he apologised abjectly for the intrusion—"Mammà" had not told him about any guests—I was a thousand times welcome to his room—and would I permit him to look for some necessary articles before he relieved me of the inconvenience of his presence? I tried to bow with proper dignity, sitting on the edge of the bed with a cloak around me, and he scuttled about, dived into various drawers for garments, tobacco, matches, and took his leave with careful courtesy, never having even glanced in my direction after the first startling encounter. The country dandy was quite as much of a "blue-rose" as the Austrian Prince who earned his name among the girls in Rome—but that paladin belongs to another story.

As one travels southward the character of the people changes, and in the later years of my life I have felt more at home with my fellow-beings of the South than with the inhabitants of Romagna. Their outlook is simpler, more indulgent, and their religious faith far more fervent. I think the southern custom of going on pilgrimages was a very valuable one to the contadini of the "Regno." It used to be rare to find middle-aged people of the labouring class in the province, who had not travelled a little in that way and thus learnt that the world was not confined to their own small town or hamlet. I suppose the good custom will die out in time, like so many others, but it will not suffer much diminution while such wonderful new centres of attraction spring up as, for instance, the "Santuário" of New Pompeii, which I described in a former book.* But many an unforgotten

* "Reminiscences of a Diplomatist's Wife."

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

shrine in the more remote hills has, like La Mentorana in the Sabines, its one day or night of glory in the year, when the peasants come in great bands, even from far away, and the chants and litanies go up all night long in and around some dim old Church. Such a festival takes place at San Salvatore in the Abruzzi, in the late summer, and is the scene of a great gathering of the people of the Penisola Sarrcutina.

A night expedition is always alluring; and, besides, I had wanted to see this particular festa for years, so I took one of the servants with me — a broad-shouldered woman of the people, strong enough to carry me if need be — and we set out, in a carrozzella, on a moonless night towards nine o'clock. Very soon we had left Sorrento and its lights behind and were climbing by steep narrow roads into the wild mountains that cluster round Monte Sant' Angelo. The chain of the Abruzzi that runs out into the sea as the backbone of the Penisola rises sharp and high from the rounded cup of the Piano di Sorrento, and, elsewhere, gives way but little on either side to the needs of men. From the "Piano" and the narrowing strip of level land, the cliffs facing the north plunge clear into the water which has worn them into huge caves, each with its tiny cove of sand, divided from one another by great outstanding buttresses of rock. As soon as one turns inland one is lost in the twisting defiles that scar the mountains through and through; and the deep old roads, narrow and steep, crawl up away from the regions of vines and olives till they reach wild, empty highlands, where only the hardiest shrubs and flowers will grow. It is an impressive experience to travel through these forgotten roads on a starlit night, further and further from the sound of the sea and the haunts of men.

PEOPLE OF THE HILLS

The loneliness is enormous, earth recedes from sight, and one is conscious of very little except that unfathomable sky overhead, dripping and sprayed with live silver to its furthest faintest depths, while some gorgeous planet of our own system wheels its way between crag and crag as one moves along. Broom and wild rosemary reach out from the wall of rock to brush your face; a tang of bitter sweetness, clear as an exclamation, fills your nostrils for an instant, and you know that you are passing a clump of immortelles hidden in a cleft you cannot see. And then the wild power of it all goes to your head; you are not a modern mortal with a thousand anchors fastening you to the scrap heap of the workaday world, but a new-born princess of romance, travelling through the hills of fairyland to take possession of your unknown, enormous castle; its thousand windows are glowing gold beyond that last peak, all lighted up for your reception; in its deep courts and airy bowers invisible subjects will minister to your wants. In a high tower looking south all the great books in the world are waiting to be read; there is a terrace a hundred feet from the ground, perfumed and trellised, where you can watch the stars; and not a single creature in the whole world will ever find the way to the castle!

“*Qui si và a piedi, 'cellenza!*” said Maria, climbing down from her seat. The little carriage could go no further, and I returned suddenly to earth and meekly followed her example. The sound of voices and footsteps began to fill the air, and we came on shadowy groups resting by the wayside, pilgrims who had come from far on foot. Then at a sudden turn we were in the piazza, and all outer things, sky and stars and peaks, were swallowed up in blackness, for the piazza was one blaze of

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

orange light, from hundreds of torches, burning luridly and outlining the dark façade of the Church with red-gold gleams that rose and sank like dancing waters; turning a face here, a costume there, to unearthly brightness and then leaping away in tall tongues of fire, to be lost in the mist of smoke overhead. The crowd was so thick that we could scarcely reach the Church, from the open doors of which a flood of broad yellow radiance streamed out over the heads of the pilgrims who knelt in serried ranks on the portico, all faces turned to the interior, whence streamed that soft illumination. When we stood on the threshold I saw that it came from the High Altar, which seemed to be floating in a vast "mandorla" of light. Hundreds and hundreds of wax candles, each a tongue of steady golden flame, surrounded the Tabernacle and reached, in an oval of fire, almost to the roof. The walls of the Church were covered with white draperies, to which were fastened wreaths and garlands and single sprays of flowers, a delicate ornamentation as old as ancient Rome and always used in the Penisola; and every pilaster was panelled from top to bottom with crimson damask trimmed with gold — those precious strips of drapery which the well-to-do families hoard from generation to generation and lend to the different Churches as required. From door to Altar rails the Church was packed with kneeling worshippers, and a great hush prevailed, for midnight had struck and Mass was about to begin.

My companion, threading her way with coaxing apologies, pulled me along till she found a place where we could both kneel by a pillar at the top of the Church, and just as we had settled ourselves a sweet-voiced old organ, high up in an invisible gallery, sent out the first notes of the chant, filling the little ancient building with a

PEOPLE OF THE HILLS

flood of music — not the usual gay tunes that Italians love to hear in Church, but solemn thrilling airs from some old Mass that I had never heard before. The singers had been brought from far, and the voices were of the best, which is saying a great deal in South Italy, where everybody is born with “a harp in his throat.” Somehow it was one of the most beautiful services I ever attended. The absorbed devotion of the people, the reverent manner of the Celebrant and his assistants, the full-throated responses that were taken up by the kneeling crowd outside, where every sound was hushed the moment Mass began — it was the very essence of whole-hearted, loving worship.

A number of persons went to Communion; there was a rousing sermon, and then came much jollification in the piazza, crammed with little booths that looked like altars of flame themselves, the wildly flaring torches lighting up strange wares — long rosaries of yellow nuts that swung in the wind, artificial roses set in a whirl of spun glass, each with its pin to stick into hat or braids of hair, holy pictures in the crude reds and blues that the people love, sweetmeats and honey-cakes and fruit. Outside and everywhere beyond, the blackness of night, and on that tiny plateau of the rocks a little whirlpool of life and fire.

We crept away, I and my Maria, and after some trouble found our carrozzella and its driver, and started for home just as the darkness thinned before the dawn. It was cold enough in the mountain roads then, and I was glad to reach the lower levels and the hospitable gate of the villa by the sea.

I think it was in that same year that my brother's two boys, enthusiastically aided by all the sailors, invented

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

a kind of switchback railway which really carried passengers! They got four or five little trucks built — without saying a word to any of us — and, coupling them together, started at the outer gate of the villa and raced down the long paved incline which led, between walls covered with stephanotis and jessamine, to the round garden in front of the house. Here the encircling walk was also paved, and the impetus of the downward rush carried the train once or twice round the whole space, after which Luigi and Antonio submissively dragged it all the way to the front gate again. There was quite an excitement in whirling round the corners, and for some days every member of the family had to get into the cars and be carried along, an occasional upset only adding to the delight of the experience, as far as Harold and Bertie were concerned. Then they built a " *ristorante* " at one point, and installed their sisters to dispense lemonade and bonbons to the weary travellers, who were supposed to have come from an immense distance. Of course the travellers had to pay — such an undertaking costs money! Then, as the autumn days drew in, there were night excursions, when the train, with headlights on, came roaring down the garden to a great accompaniment of hoots and whistles, quite an alarming thing to meet if one were taking a stroll in the twilight.

The " *ferro-via* " was a great success, but the owners of the line panted for more public recognition. We elders did not care to risk ourselves in the trucks after dark, and for two or three evenings, as we sat over our tea in the drawing-room, we wondered rather at the steady persistence with which the train rushed backwards and forwards outside. The boys were unusually silent about their exploits now, but from their bright eyes and their

PEOPLE OF THE HILLS

sisters' obstinate refusal to answer questions, we could not help fancying that some kind of mischief was afoot. Then one evening, just before dinner, Bonifazio came into the drawing-room, looking very scared.

"Signora mia," he exclaimed to my sister-in-law, "do you know what the Signorini are doing? The entire town is gathered in the piazzale outside the gate, and the young gentlemen are taking all the passengers the cars will hold, twice round the garden — for two sous the trip! And the young ladies are actually *selling refreshments to these contadini!* For the love of Heaven, let the Signora stop this scandal! The people are fighting to get into the cars!"

It would be interesting to know what is really going on in children's minds — those fairy plans which they weave steadily through lessons and play and would rather die than confide to their elders! I remember a surprise that my small brother and sister sprung upon the family before I was married — a scheme all worked and irrevo-cably launched before accident revealed it to any of the grown-ups in the house. Daisy was about nine years old, and Arthur, her submissive slave, just over seven. It was the height of the winter season, and there was the usual rush of engagements for weeks ahead, when at some afternoon reception a friend of my mother's said to her: "We are so glad next Thursday is free! We shall be so much interested to see your children's play!"

"My children's play? There must be some mistake," my mother replied. "I have not issued any invitations for theatricals!"

"Your little people have," the lady retorted. "Look at this!"

And she produced a card on which was written in a

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

nice round hand: "Miss Terry and Master Arthur Terry request the pleasure of Mrs. _____'s company on Thursday next at nine o'clock. (*Theatrakulls.*)"

My mother's feelings were not to be described! Within ten minutes three or four other people smilingly informed her that they, too, had been invited and certainly meant to come. There was nothing for it but to go straight home and find out what the little monkeys had committed us to. On being sternly questioned, Daisy, with the imperturbable calmness that distinguished her even then, produced a list of some two hundred names, culled from Mamma's visiting book, and said: "These are the people we have asked. We chose the ones we liked, of course. *I* have composed the play and it will be most interesting. Arthur is in love with me, Sofia is my rival—I have one or two other children in it, but they are rather stupid, so I shall have to do most of the acting myself. Don't worry me, please—you have nothing to do but order the supper and send for the chairs!"

Of course we submitted. Everything had been done in order; Daisy (Arthur could not write well enough as yet) must have devoted her playtime, for days, to writing out the invitations, which the servants had carried to their addresses, never doubting but that the Signora's authorisation had been obtained. We were not allowed to see the last rehearsals even, the drop-curtain of the little theatre in the ballroom being jealously closed while they went on. I tried to get taken on as manager—no use! "I know exactly what I am about," said my small sister. "I haven't watched you grown-ups all these years for nothing! It's going to be a *great success!*"

Which it certainly was! Daisy's speeches were a lit-

PEOPLE OF THE HILLS

tle long, because some of the others forgot their parts and she had to bridge their silences by expressing their sentiments for them. "I know what you would say, dear friend — your heart is true, but you fear the vengeance of the Marquis! Oh, I understand!" And so on. Then, at the critical moment of the love scene, Arthur got stage-fright, and the Marquise, who was naturally taller than her adorer, stooped towards him and energetically whispered, "Go down on your knees and kiss my hand *this minute, stupid!*" at which a roar of merriment swept through the room, to end in a storm of applause as the small boy, dropping on one knee, gave the hand a smacking kiss and exclaimed ardently, "*My Angel!*"

Oh, yes, it was a great success! The little Marquise was a born actress, and carried it all off so well that the guests declared they had never enjoyed an evening so much. But we "grown-ups" had passed some anxious moments; and when it was all over and the triumphant performers had had all the applause, as well as all the cake and goodies they wanted, we extracted a sleepy promise that we should be at least warned the next time they asked the town to a play!

CHAPTER X

A STORY OF VENICE

A Follower of the Condottieri—The Raw Recruit—Division of the Duke-dom of Milan—Carmagnola's Turn—Growth in Wealth and Power—Disaffection—Venice Acquires His Services—War with Milan—A Leisurely Campaign—Carmagnola at the Height of His Glory—Fortune Turns Against the Venetians—Stirrings of Suspicion—Reception in Venice—The Senate Chamber—Growing Dusk—The Attack—End of His Part in the World—Another Story of the North—St. Raniero, the Patron of Pisa—The Power of Temperance.

HERE is a story of Venice. In the early part of the Fifteenth Century a Northern soldier, riding home through the sweet-smelling summer twilight, dreaming in all probability of some dusky-eyed maiden of the border states, stopped by the side of a field to look about him for a shelter for the night. That he would be welcome at any inn, he was sure, for he was returning from the wars to spend his not very hard-earned prize money, of which his saddlebags were full.

One can imagine him, pushing back his helmet and regarding the fair countryside with the appreciative eye of the professional marauder, smacking his dusty lips at the thought of the weeks of hilarious wickedness that his loot would buy for him. The picture is not over-drawn, I can assure the reader, for they were little more than wild beasts, those followers of the great Condottieri, brought under an iron discipline, the yoke of which they were willing to bear, for a time, in return for the ample pay and the opportunities, which their service afforded them, of sacking unoffending towns and robbing

A STORY OF VENICE

and spearing harmless and unarmed citizens and ravishing their wives and daughters. Here and there, stray flowers in those acres of weeds, a fairly decent character appeared among them, but, from such accounts as can be found, these latter never seem to have stayed long in their ranks.

As it has been said, the rival bands that infested Italy and Southern France in those merry days never made any serious attempt to injure each other, unless driven to such unpleasant measures by the sternest necessity — or, to be sure, unless some particularly rich bit of loot was between them. As a general thing, though, they do not seem to have displayed even the common courage of the wolf. The longer a campaign could be dragged out the better for all concerned, was their motto, and they lived up to it, even to the point of punctiliously letting loose all the prisoners they took from each other after every engagement. A safer and more care-free life than theirs would be difficult, if not impossible, to imagine. The people who hired them were, of course, utterly unable to cope with their enemies — with their enemies' bravos, that is to say — by themselves, and were as completely helpless against their own servants; it was altogether an ideal state of things.

To return to our trooper, breathing his horse and, probably, smacking his lips over the prospect of the cheer with which his blood-spotted loot would provide him for the next month or so. Looking around in the early dusk, he noticed a boy, working desultorily in the fields, and, while his horse rested, he studied him. There was something in the way in which he carried his head, and the set of his chin and jaw, which sounded a sympathetic echo in the trooper's breast. This was no com-

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

mon peasant, he told himself, and called out to the boy to come over and speak to him. Nothing loath, the youth obeyed, and the upshot of this conversation was that the boy elected to take the trooper's advice and follow him.

The trooper, one imagines, must have been in the service of Facino Cane, a grizzled, deaf old soldier with a high reputation, as reputations went in those days, and it did not take the new recruit long to show his worth. Even when he was still young, Cane seems to have recognised in him an equal if not a superior and refused flatly to promote him, swearing that, if he was given one step, he would take all the rest for himself.

Francesco Bussone, better known as Carmagnola, retired into himself, and bided his time. Cane was great, and with Cane there was always profitable employment in plenty. So he decided to remain where he was; but, if Facino Cane continued to behave as he had been doing of late, it was not likely that he would last for very long, and in the happy and quite possible event of his being assassinated before long, Carmagnola would take his place. There would be no one, he felt sure, who would wish to oppose him, and, if there were, he thought he knew how to overcome their opposition. Cane had a splendid force under him—and they would need a leader, to be of any use to themselves. They would choose him for themselves. One can almost hear him saying to himself, as he leaves the chief's presence and looks back at the door: "Eh! chi va piano va sano — chi va sano va lontano!" ("Who goes slowly, goes safely—who goes safely, goes far! ")

Cane, for his part, was neither going slowly nor safely. Giovanni, Duke of Milan, had but recently died. He had been as good a soldier as any Condottiere that ever

A STORY OF VENICE

drew sword and he had held his Dukedom together with his own good right arm. But now, in the hands of his eldest son, Gian Maria, the inheritance was falling to pieces. Gian Maria was a degenerate — a lunatic — it is even said that he fed his hounds with human flesh; and, in a very short time, the cities of the Dukedom — Piacenza, Parma, Cremona, Lodi — revolted, and the several Condottieri, who had formerly served Giovanni, seized the opportunity of realising their ambition, which was to become independent rulers themselves. There was no great difficulty about this, once a division of the spoil was agreed upon, for each had a small army at his back and the ability to use it. The inhabitants, helpless in the face of trained fighters, put forward no opposition, so that, in six months or less, six or seven Dukes existed where only one had existed before.

Cane seized upon Pavia, the younger son's portion, and kept the heir a prisoner in his own court. Not long afterwards he dethroned the elder son, and, it is to be supposed, arranged his end for him at the hands of the Milanese. He, himself, died in Pavia within a day of the Duke's assassination. No remark is made by historians on the subject of his death save that he died, but where the character of his ducal prisoner is considered and the excellent reasons he had for wishing his gaoler dead are taken into account, the latter's end may, I think, be safely laid at Filippo Maria's door.

So that, in the end, Carmagnola was right in his determination to wait upon events. Now his turn came. The soldiers were left leaderless, and Carmagnola seized the captainship instantly — at the age of twenty-two — while Filippo Maria as instantly married Cane's widow, in order to get the old soldier's estates, and, these being se-

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

cured, brought a false accusation against her and had her executed.

This worthy couple then joined hands, to recover the lost cities, and Carmagnola began to show something of his quality. He recaptured Milan, killing the usurper, and, one by one, brought back the other cities to his employer, as a reward for which he was made Count of Castelmuro and married to a daughter of Giovanni Galeazzo, one Antonia.

It seemed as though Fortunatus' purse had been emptied over him, in the years that followed; wealth, honour, position all were his, and so rich and powerful did he become that he was even permitted to invest in the bonded debt of Venice.

He must have grown careless, after a while, for his enemies — and they were numbered by the score — continued to get the Duke's ear and to poison his mind. They probably used Carmagnola's popularity with his men as an instrument, and played upon Filippo's morbid pride and his unhealthy nerves, until he saw in his great general a Frankenstein of his own creation, which, if it were not itself destroyed, would presently destroy him.

One cannot think that Carmagnola was anything but careless, for when Philip demanded some of his body-guard from him for a special purpose he protested with honest vigour against this taking of a weapon from one who knew how to use it and handing it to one who did not. Getting no reply, he became impatient, and sought one in person, by forcing his way into Philip's presence, but he was stopped at the gate and then his temper left him.

His remarks were few and incisive, his opinions of the courtiers about Philip's person plain as the tower

A STORY OF VENICE

at which he shouted them, and he wound up with an open threat directed at both. That done, he turned and rode off with his half-dozen attendants, and one brave gentleman who had ridden out to pursue him was so terrified at the sight of him, as he galloped across the marshy fields, his head on his chest, rage like an embodied spirit beside him, that he thought better of his intention and made back into the safe shelter of Abbiti. Carmagnola pursued his way without pausing until he came to the Court of Amadeus of Savoy, who was his own liege lord, and here he immediately offered his services, explaining at the same time what had just happened to him.

Filippo, in the meanwhile, confiscated his estates and seized his wife and daughter as hostages. That Antonia was his own sister — or, at least, had always passed as such — made not the slightest difference to the scoundrelly Filippo, and Carmagnola does not seem to have so much as troubled his head about the women.

Yet, for some reason, he seems to have excused Filippo's conduct — openly, at least — and to have placed the blame where most of it belonged — on his surroundings. Then, casually, as though the idea had only just occurred to him, he spoke of various and choice pieces of territory, whose ownership, though nominally Filippo's, was, he averred, doubtful.

To his disappointment, Amadeus refused to be drawn into the affair, and Carmagnola presently set off for Venice, always a safe resort for warriors of any quality.

He arrived at an auspicious moment, for Venice was hesitating as to the worth-whileness of an alliance which had been proposed to her by Florence for the purpose of attacking Carmagnola's late master, Filippo of Milan.

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

The Venetians, living as they did, in an almost continuous state of war with one or other of their neighbours, were only too glad of the opportunity of gaining the services of the famous free-lance and gave him the command of their land army, within a very few weeks of his arrival — Foscari, the Procurator of St. Mark, in the meantime, pushing forward the alliance with Florence, in season and out of season. In this he was opposed by Mocenigo, the Doge, who, in spite of his eighty years, and even on his deathbed, in the presence of senators and ministers, uttered a solemn and prophetic warning against the war. He must have been a truly wonderful old man, for in that farewell speech of his, delivered from the edge of the grave, he gave a complete and accurate account of the State's finances, and of its employés', down to the ship's caulkers and the manufacturers of fustian, besides remembering the number of gentlemen with incomes between seven hundred and four thousand ducats. At the end of it, he told his hearers that, if they rejected his advice and quarrelled with Milan, in a very short while they would find themselves under the heel of a military despotism which would take the very coats from their backs — all of which presently came to pass. Finally he warned them against Foscari, whose election to the Dogeship some of them, as he knew, favoured.

But his warnings were in vain, for Foscari was elected over Loredano, in a conclave the account of which is curiously like that of a political convention of to-day — the holding of a number of votes in reserve, the speeches on both sides, the trick by which Foscari irritated his noble old opponent into losing his temper and abusing his adversaries. There is nothing new, of course, under

A STORY OF VENICE

the sun, but it gives one a queer thrill when one comes upon things like these.

Soon afterwards, Carmagnola was offered the command already referred to, and Filippo, on hearing the news, made an attempt to have his old comrade poisoned, but the agents were caught and executed after having been thoroughly and soundly tortured.

There followed visits and embassies from Milan and Florence — the Milanese gay, careless, assured; the Florentines grave and soberly clad, leaving no stone unturned, no mine of favour unworked. Carmagnola stalked through the Milanese Masque, like a shadow through a field of poppies, and when the Senators, torn between the pleadings of the Florentine Ambassador and the easy, somewhat scornful reply of the Milanese envoy, hesitated, the Condottiere, enraged by the attempt just made upon his life, presented his side of the case, pointing out that Filippo's apparent strength was only the result of his, Carmagnola's, victories, and that of his own he had none at all, and openly proclaiming his hatred and scorn, both of the Duke and his soldiers.

That settled the matter, and the league with Florence, which presently embraced Ferrara, Mantua, the Sienese, Amadeus VIII of Savoy, and King Alphonso of Naples, was formed.

It is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to discover the true character of Carmagnola at this time of day. Some speak of him as being a double-faced villain, some — Sismondi, for instance — as of a demigod. Great he was, talented in many directions, and all but invincible; like others, he may have had several sides to his nature, and each of these, as it met for the moment the sun of

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

events, may have represented the whole man for the time being.

The Duke of Milan now began to feel the weight of the hand he had turned against himself, although, at the outset of the war, Carmagnola does not appear to have exerted himself greatly. Brescia fell — whether to the Florentine commander or to the Venetian, is a matter of opinion. Probably the Florentine siege works and the effect of Carmagnola's reputation were equally responsible — and the Duke ceded the conquest on the 30th of December; not, however, before he had made an attempt to burn down the Venetian arsenal and another of his several agents had been caught by the Venetians and carefully tortured to death.

Carmagnola, from all accounts, seems still to have been divided between the desire of earning his pay from the Venetians and an unwillingness, even now and in spite of everything, to push his old employer more than was necessary to accomplish the ends he had in mind. This was difficult, for the Venetians, having paid like the hard-headed merchants they were, wanted plenty of blood and destruction for their money, and the amicable habit which time and practice had crystallised into a precedent, of returning prisoners after an engagement, in order to keep the good work going on, was not at all to their minds.

It was not long before Filippo began to tire of the almost monotonous series of defeats which overtook his leaders, and, though breathing fire against Carmagnola, and complaining bitterly of what he was pleased to call the "bad faith" of the poor Florentines (whom he had been bullying so heartily and for so long), he was forced to sue for the good offices of Pope Martin V, who, although none too pleased at being dragged into such com-

A STORY OF VENICE

pany, yet helped him, for the sake of the smudged name he bore.

Of course such a peace could not last for any length of time. No one of the parties to it trusted any of the others in the slightest, and Venice had, so far, swallowed up all the profits of the campaign which included Brescia and all its castles and territory up to the Lago di Garda, and a portion of Cremona besides.

This peace was concluded on the 30th of December, 1426, and Carmagnola went into winter quarters, under the admiring eyes of his temporary fellow-citizens.

His family had contrived to join him, by now, and the time passed pleasantly away for the grizzled and somewhat war-worn captain. He had punished Filippo, and had besides secured what promised to be the most profitable employment upon which he had ever entered. He knew the Visconti; he must have been quite sure that Filippo had no intention of giving up the struggle as tamely as that, and when it recommenced he would, he imagined, be able to dictate the terms under which he could condescend to serve.

He was right in both conjectures. No sooner was the peace signed than Filippo turned his energies to the accumulation of a force with which to open a campaign in the spring. Besides this, he assembled a fleet for the purpose of attacking Mantua and Ferrara. This the Venetians destroyed near Cremona on the 21st of May, 1427.

Filippo, who had up till now taken small thought of anything except numbers and talent, soon began to feel, as so many others have done before and since, the extreme difficulty of getting any cohesive action from a force which, split up into many small bodies, gave its

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

allegiance to six or seven separate commanders, all of equal merit, and all claiming, on their records, the right to administer the whole. Carmagnola, on the other hand, being a Condottiere himself, allowed no one, however distinguished his birth or his position, even to approach his throne, much less share it. The Venetian authorities themselves he handled as roughly as he dared, and they, as Mocenigo had prophesied, found themselves under a despotism which made the rule of the dreaded "Ten" a kindergarten affair in comparison.

Filippo, exercising a purely imaginary authority, gave the command of his troops to Nicolo Piccino, a pupil of the celebrated Braccio, and he attacked Carmagnola at Casalecco on the 12th of July, but so thick was the dust under foot that before they had well engaged they became invisible and separated without shock.

It was a leisurely campaign. Whatever might be the anxiety of the principals to settle the quarrel, their defenders were not to be hurried, and it was not until the 11th of October that Carmagnola was called upon to fight a pitched battle. He had been spending most of his time in the interval at the baths of Albano, where he took a cure for rheumatism.

Suspicion is a disease among some people, and, though its workings are not by any means confined to one class, it must be owned that power of any kind has always been a happy breeding ground for it. With the rulers of Venice it was hereditary, and, since it was unsafe openly to suspect each other, they invariably lavished their venomous mistrust upon their servants and instruments. But, true to their Latinity, they gave their victim no chance of feeling it or even of defending himself. In silence they judged, in silence they acted, and always

A STORY OF VENICE

with such a wealth of deception, cunning, and falsehood as to proclaim their own cowardice and meanness from the housetops.

The battle of the 11th of October took place in a marsh near Macalo, and Carmagnola having lured his adversary, Carlo Malastata, into the swamps — with which he himself was perfectly familiar — turned upon and beat him soundly, capturing, it is said, upwards of five thousand, including Malastata himself.

He made no attempt to pursue, and immediately released all of his prisoners, thereby giving the Venetian Senate a solid handle for the blade of calumny which they had been forging. When the protests of the Venetians reached him, he refused to discuss the matter, merely replying that it was the custom of war and, further, that it was his wish. His contempt for his employers was a little too open, and they, though apparently acquiescing and praising his skill, were already plotting his end. The gentle habit of executing a defeated general, wherever possible, was in vogue then and for many years afterwards. As long as Carmagnola could continue to win cities and provinces for them, so long could he continue to live, but no longer.

A new peace was signed on the 18th of April, 1428, and peace descended upon Venice for nearly three years. Carmagnola passed the time in Venice with his family around him; treated with all honour and respect to his face, laughed at, as he knew, for his low birth and rough ways, behind his back. Disliked, but courted, under pressure, for no one could say how long this new peace would last, and Venice, in the field, was Carmagnola. Without him, Filippo's men — Piccino, Tonelli, and the rest — would strip her to the waterfront.

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

The Florentines, grown confident and aggressive, now took the opportunity to attack the Lord of Lucca, Paolo Quinigi, a one-time ally of Filippo's, and the Lucchesi, revolting, deposed Quinigi and sent him to Milan as a prisoner. The Florentines were, soon afterwards, attacked and routed by Piccino at Sarchio on the 2d of December, 1430; and once again the old flame broke out.

Carmagnola, to everybody's surprise, resigned his commission — or, rather, attempted to resign it — and the Senate, in a panic, offered him such terms for another campaign as were never offered to any Condottiere before or since.

Carmagnola, who was then, or had been but a short while before, in communication with Filippo, finally accepted the command, though with reluctance. Perhaps he had the prophetic depression which so often seizes commanders before a disaster; perhaps he had tired of Venice and her service.

Fortune had turned against the Venetians. First their admiral, Trevisano, was caught napping at Cremona and his fleet destroyed under Carmagnola's furious eyes. His remarks to the admiral afterwards and to the Venetian Senate were so mixed and incoherent with rage that the Senate hurriedly sent down special Commissioners to assure him of their confidence and love.

Piccino wandered about picking up odds and ends, a castle here, a town there, but Carmagnola refused to move. Filippo, wild with delight, hovered in his neighbourhood, sending taunts and insults to him on every opportunity, but the old tiger lay in his lair.

He had been defeated at Soncino, and, though that was a small and unimportant event in itself, yet taken in conjunction with the disaster to the fleet, it became a disaster,

A STORY OF VENICE

too. A distemper arose among the horses that year in Italy, which accounts, in a large degree, for Carmagnola's inaction, and, though he roused himself sufficiently to defeat the Hungarians at Friuli, he relapsed again afterwards into inactivity.

No signs of impatience or mistrust escaped the Senate, however. Instead, they sent a splendid deputation, begging him to give himself the trouble of returning to Venice for a while to consult with the Signoria as to the conduct of the coming campaign; and he, never doubting that his position was unchanged and that, surrounded by enemies, Venice still looked to him as the one man who could save her, rode through Lombardy in April, 1432, accompanied by Gonzaga, the Lord of Mantua, and embarked on the Brenta, hailed by the populace and loaded with marks of deference and confidence by the great men of the Senate who went out to meet him. All along the waterway, crowds turned out to greet the hope of Venice, and the rich and noble, whose country houses stood along the banks of the river, turned out likewise, decorating their homes and making festas as he passed.

A gay people they were, with their satins and their music and their dancing and their love-making. April in Venice is made for kissing, it is the only suitable occupation for any one with a spark of life in his soul, and one can imagine the boats on the slow-moving river, as the evening came on, and the lovers' moon came out over the water — music, love — youth and fire.

It was through this that the great Captain journeyed, leisurely, as became his dignity. At Mestre he was met by some gentlemen of his acquaintance, all smiles and bows and compliments, in whose company he crossed the shadowy lagoons and disembarked.

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

Nine Senators — red-robed, capped, monuments of the dignity of the State — were waiting for him here, and his progress to the Palace of the Doge was almost regal in its splendour. With all formality he was introduced into the presence of the Senate, and given a chair of honour. He was welcomed, praised, and listened to with deferential attention. It was growing late, by now, and the Senate Chamber was becoming too dim to distinguish the faces of those about him. But no lights were called for, and he, dreaming no doubt, of seeing his wife and children again that night, sat on, while one Senator after another rose and spoke and sat down again.

He had other things upon his mind, too. Filippo — old days — old triumphs; the promise that had been made him, that if he could but extinguish the Visconti for ever, his old estates were to be given back to him, besides new ones here in Venice. It had even been hinted and hinted strongly that the only obstacle to his becoming Duke of Milan himself, was the man who called himself the Duke — Filippo Visconti. There seemed to be no bar to his advancement to any position he might choose — he, the son of a peasant, picked up at dusk by a wandering trooper in Savoy!

Dusk! It was getting towards dark now!

He stirred in his chair and looked about him. The place seemed less crowded than it had been when he had last observed it, and, thinking that the moment had arrived when he could at last fling aside the world and return to his family, he rose to depart.

What were those dark shapes hovering near his chair? Those were no Senators! He peered at them as he passed, but they paid him no attention and he moved on towards the door.

A STORY OF VENICE

Instantly he felt himself seized from behind and the dark shapes materialised into Sbirri — soldier police — as he struck out right and left, bellowing and roaring in his fury. But he was only one, and there were twenty or thirty of them, and he was chained hand and foot before he had recovered from his first amazement.

The place was deserted now, save for them, and in the gloom he was hurried along, pushed and hustled, down, down, until a door creaked open and he was flung into a cell, pitch-black and damp. The door slammed to behind him, and his little part in the world was played.

The next day he was “put to the question,” but no records remain, none being kept, of what passed in the little cell during the dread ordeal; and twenty days later, gagged and chained, he was led out to the Piazza, and there, between the pillars, beheaded.

His grave is in the great Church of St. Francis, in Milan, beside his wife.

While we are still in the North, the story of the Patron of Pisa, St. Raniero, may interest my readers.

He was a Scacciari, born in Pisa about the year 1100, and grew up with the other noble children of the place, cheerful and pleasure-loving as were they — and as, it may be noticed in passing, were several of the greatest Saints in the Calendar.

His conversion came about through a holy man, whose name has not survived. Raniero, one day, was playing and dancing with some damsels in the shade of a great tree, outside the city, when he noticed a man standing near who seemed to be studying him intently; after a while, he laid his lyre down on the grass and returned

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

the gaze, with the intention of bringing home to the stranger the annoyance which the look was causing him. But the stranger continued to stare, and presently the boy arose to approach him.

But, although he had risen to his feet, he made no attempt to advance, for something in the stern, yet gently pitying, eyes of the other arrested his movement, and, before he could recover from the half-hypnotised condition, the stranger was moving off himself.

Then the boy came to life, and ran after the man of God, flinging himself upon his knees, and catching at the hem of his garment, and crying out his sorrow for his sins; the other lifted him up, and bade him be of good cheer, but Raniero, by now, was half blind with weeping and it was some time before he could see or hear clearly.

He did not turn back again towards Pisa, but made his way, by slow stages, to the Holy Land — no very safe harbourage in the middle of the Twelfth Century. On arriving, he took off his own clothes, and received from a priest the shirt of a slave, which, for the proper humiliation of the flesh, he continued to wear until he died.

Now it is the habit, even of the most broad-minded of our Protestant brethren deliberately to close every avenue by which information might reach their intelligences, and to seal them up tightly, before they embark upon any study of the Saints, or of the Church. In parenthesis, it must be said of the Germans, doubtless true to the Teutonic passion for accuracy, that as a general rule they will and do search after and transcribe the true facts of a happening, at whatever cost to their own private feelings — as Haeckel found to his cost. Not so with the English. They glory in incredulity — and prune their belief daily

A STORY OF VENICE

until nothing more than the bare tree is left. So that one is not in the least astonished to find in the middle of an Englishman's otherwise fairly faithful tale a shocked horror — indeed, it cannot be described in any other terms — at the thought of the desert's being an abiding-place for devils. People, on the other hand, find that people with any real experience of the desert are quite ready to believe that anything horrible might be found there. If ever there was a proper ballroom for Satan, says one, it is the desert!

St. Raniero found them there, aplenty — so did St. Anthony — and St. Ephrem — and St. Procopius and St. Jerome, and many, many more.

St. Raniero vowed himself to abstinence, and a hard struggle he found it to be until one morning, very early, when after a night of tossing and turning and praying, he fell asleep and dreamed that a wonderfully wrought vessel of gold, covered with the most beautiful gems, stood beside him. It was full of pitch and sulphur, and these presently ignited, burning fiercely, and threatening the destruction of the vase. But, just as it seemed to be on the point of destruction, a little phial containing a few drops of water appeared, and he was bidden to sprinkle some upon the fire; he did so with some difficulty, since it was burning so fiercely, and, behold! the fire was extinguished in a moment.

On awakening he considered the dream for some time, trying to read some meaning into it, and presently it was borne in upon him that the vessel was his body, the pitch and sulphur his passions and appetites, and that the water was temperance, which would quench these. From that time onward he lived altogether upon bread and water, even performing the most of his miracles with wa-

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

ter, for which he had an especial reverence, so that he came to be known in Pisa as "San Domini dell'Acqua."

That he was a water-drinker himself did not affect his detestation of dishonesty in the matter of wine, however. Being at one time in Messina, he stayed one night at an inn there, and, after watching the innkeeper for a little while, became persuaded that he was mixing water into the wine which he was selling. Beckoning to him, Raniero told him to cease, but the host first laughed and then grew angry, telling him to mind his own business. Then the Saint took him by the shoulder and turned him round, and pointed to a cask which was set in a distant corner.

"See there," he said. Every one by now was looking in the same direction, and to their terror and amazement there appeared upon the cask a huge black cat with enormous wings. The host flung himself at the Saint's feet, howling, and the rest of the company began to crowd and push out of the place, but the Saint directed them to remain, and dismissed the demon swiftly.

He returned afterwards to Pisa, where he lived for many years, and performed many wonders, healings, and conversions before he died, and his tomb is in the wall of the Duomo, where an altar has been erected to his memory.

CHAPTER XI

QUEEN JOAN OF NAPLES

A Conspicuous Feminine Sinner—Marriage of State—Her Beauty—Her Hungarian Husband—Petrarch and the Monk—Joan's Ascent to the Throne—The Naples Succession—Her Favourites—The Churches of Naples—Joan's Lovers—Factions of Naples—Charles of Durazzo—A Bold Proposal—Charles' Ambitious Plots—War of the Factions—Disappearance of Maria—Becomes the Wife of Charles—Joan's Horror.

OF all feminine sinners known to history, Joan of Anjou, Queen of Naples and of Jerusalem, affords, perhaps, the most conspicuous example of the perils attendant upon what are known as "marriages of State"—that is to say, marriages brought about for reasons of State and without reference to the personal inclinations of the contracting parties themselves.

The elder of the two daughters born to Charles, Duke of Calabria and Marie of Valois—both of whom had predeceased their father and father-in-law, Robert, King of Naples—Joan was married as a child of fourteen to her cousin Andrew, the grandson of King Charles of Hungary, the brother of King Robert; and, on the death of the latter in the month of January, 1343, succeeded him as his granddaughter on the throne of Naples. At that time Joan, although not yet fifteen years old, was beautiful with the beauty and grace of a grown woman; her eyes were of a shade of brown so deep as to be almost black; whilst the pallor of her complexion was enhanced by the lustrous dark hair of her which she wore, according to the fashion of the day, in two long and

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

heavy plaits that fell nearly to her knees, moreover, her tall, slender figure added several years to her appearance, whilst the expression of her face, albeit sensitive and gentle, was one of determination and of a latent strength of purpose far beyond that of most girls of her age. For Joan of Anjou had already learned the meaning both of love and of hate — the hate of her husband and the guilty love of another than he. The name of the man for whom she had, even then, betrayed her Hungarian husband was Robert of Cabano, the son of Filippa Cabano, and her husband, Raymond, a Saracen, bought out of slavery by another Raymond Cabano, who had given him his own name in baptism and had procured for him the post of head cook to Charles the Hammer, King of Naples and elder brother of King Robert, the grandfather and precursor of Queen Joan. From being head cook, Raymond had since risen to the most eminent post of Seneschal of the Kingdom of Naples.

The way of Joan's loveless marriage — the source of all her sins and misfortunes — to her cousin Andrew of Hungary was this: It had been arranged by her grandfather, King Robert, in the intention of making amends to Andrew for having usurped the sovereignty of Naples from Andrew's father, Carobert of Hungary, the oldest son of King Robert's brother, Charles the Hammer. With this object, King Robert had caused Andrew to be brought as a child to his Court at Naples, that the boy might become fitted by education and surroundings to be the husband of Joan and share with her the crown of Naples and of Jerusalem. For, be it said, the Hungarian-born Andrew was by nature uncouth and savage and cold, and altogether unsuited, both in his temperament and his

QUEEN JOAN OF NAPLES

views of life, to fulfil King Robert's expectations of him. Instead of growing more tender, more responsive and affectionate in the genial surroundings of the Neapolitan Court, as had been hoped might prove to be the case, he seemed, on the contrary, to become daily more reserved, more imbued with the sense of his own importance, more generally domineering and less sympathetic towards those about him. However, his marriage with Joan had been duly solemnised some months before the death of old King Robert in order that the latter's fondest wish might be accomplished betimes; but, to the rage and disappointment of Andrew, as soon as the King was dead, Joan alone had been proclaimed as his successor by her cousin, Charles, Duke of Durazzo and Albania, who had presented her as their sole, legitimate sovereign to the populace assembled below the windows of the Castel Nuovo in a room of which King Robert's dead body, the breath but scarcely gone out of it, lay still warm upon the bed on which he had died. Moreover, not only Charles of Durazzo, but others, including principally Robert of Cabano and another cousin of the Queen, Louis of Taranto, had absolutely refused to do homage to Andrew of Hungary; to Joan alone had they bent the knee and sworn fealty. Only one person of all those present had protested energetically against the exclusion of Prince Andrew from the immediate proclamation of sovereignty; this was a certain Father Robert, a monk, the tutor of Andrew, whom he had accompanied from Hungary to Naples and whom he never deserted as long as the Prince lived. This Father Robert earned the especial dislike of Petrarch, to whom the monk's austere and masterful personality was as gall on the tongue, to judge from the poet's description of him.

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

As has been told then, by the time that King Robert passed away, leaving his kingdom to Joan and to Andrew, her consort, these two had been man and wife for long months; during which period Joan had loved, not her husband, but the handsome swaggering Saracen, Robert of Cabano. But by now, when she was become Queen of Naples by the death of her grandfather, Joan had grown weary of the insolence of Robert's dominion over her and was minded to throw off the yoke of it. Also, her affections — which, be it said in justice to her, had formerly been consistently offered to her husband and as consistently rejected by him — had turned towards one of the very few completely disinterested and unselfish persons at the Court. This was Bertrand of Artois, whose father, Charles of Artois, had been appointed by King Robert's will one of the regents of the kingdom until Andrew and Joan should have attained their twenty-fifth year.

Joan had only one sister, Mary, a mere child, who was scarcely thirteen years old when Joan came to the throne; this Princess Mary, by the terms of King Robert's testament, was to inherit the throne in the event of her elder sister's dying without issue; in addition, the old King had expressed a wish that Princess Mary should be affianced either to Louis, King of Hungary, elder brother of Andrew, or, failing Louis, to the Duke of Normandy, eldest son of the King of France. In case of the death without heirs of both Joan and Mary, the sovereignty would by rights fall to Charles of Durazzo, eldest son of King Robert's younger brother, who had died some years previously, John, Duke of Durazzo and Albania. John of Durazzo had left behind him a widow, Agnes, and two younger sons besides Charles; these were Lu-

QUEEN JOAN OF NAPLES

dovico, Count of Gravina, and Robert, Prince of the Morea. The youngest brother of King Robert, Philip, Prince of Taranto, who had likewise predeceased him, had also left a widow, who bore the title of Empress of Constantinople, inherited from her grandfather, Baldwin II, and three sons, Robert, Philip, and finally Louis of Taranto, the handsomest and most accomplished knight of his day, then but barely turned three-and-twenty. There had survived King Robert, too, his widow Sancia of Aragon, a character as noble and holy as the majority of those composing the Neapolitan Court were debased and self-seeking and unscrupulous. Before departing this life King Robert had obtained from Queen Sancia a promise to the effect that she would remain in the world and at Court for a whole year, in order to watch over the young King and Queen, Andrew and Joan — it being Queen Sancia's announced intention to enter as soon as possible into a convent, there to end her days in peace and prayer — and to protect their relationship to one another from the perils which, as the dying man had clearly foreseen, must inevitably menace it. And, very particularly, he had warned his widow to be on her guard, where Joan was concerned, against three especial dangers — the love of Bertrand of Artois, the beauty of Louis of Taranto, and the ambition of Charles of Durazzo.

So that, no sooner was King Robert dead, than his wishes in respect to the mutual sovereignty of Andrew and John were contemptuously put aside by those who proclaimed Joan, and Joan alone, as their new Queen to

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

the Neapolitan people; but Joan's acquiescence in their proclamation of her as sole sovereign cannot be overlooked, foreshadowing as it would almost seem to do some already half-formed instinctive project of becoming actually that which she had been proclaimed to be — the single occupant of the throne.

Instantly, moreover, her Hungarian husband and his partisans, Father Robert, the Dominican Friar, together with divers Hungarian nobles and Giovanni Pipino, Count of Altamura, one of the most powerful lords of the kingdom and the most hated by the people, held counsel among themselves as to how they might best defeat the projects of the Queen's party. This, they decided, could only be done by acquainting King Andrew's mother, Elizabeth of Poland, and his brother, King Louis of Hungary, with the terms of King Robert's last will, and of how a conspiracy had been set on foot to deprive King Andrew of his rightful share in the government of Naples. Also, a complaint in the same terms was to be sent to the Pope at Avignon, and a request made of the Holy Father that he would issue a Bull of coronation on King Andrew's behalf, thereby duly confirming him in his rights of, at least, equal sovereignty with Joan, his wife. At the same time, Father Robert tried to impress upon Andrew the advisability of coming as soon as possible to some kind of understanding upon the subject with Joan herself before her favourites should have alienated her affections entirely from him.

These favourites whom the good monk had in mind were some of them men and some of them women. Of the men — Robert of Cabano, Louis of Taranto, and Bertrand of Artois — we have already seen something; of the women we have as yet made acquaintance with only

QUEEN JOAN OF NAPLES

two — Filippa Cabano, the mother of Robert the half-breed, and formerly governess to the Princesses Joan and Mary; and the Empress of Constantinople, their aunt and the mother of Louis of Taranto and his brothers. Besides Donna Filippa and the Empress, however, there were three others who had influence over Joan — the Countesses of Terlizzi and Morcone, daughters of Donna Filippa, and, lastly and supremely, a young and lovely girl of sixteen, known simply as “Cancia,” who occupied, officially, the position of tiring-woman to the young Queen.

Cancia had been put into this employment by her protectress, Donna Filippa, in order that, by her wiles and companionship, she might corrupt the spirit of Joan and render her the more averse to the remonstrances of Father Robert, the Dominican, on behalf of Andrew of Hungary, his pupil; and so bring her more and more under the influence of her lover, Robert of Cabano, Filippa's own son. And Cancia had played her part so effectually that, it is said, Joan loved her more even than she did her own sister, Princess Mary.

And, as it happened, Donna Filippa was beginning to suspect that, at last, Joan was tiring of her intrigue with Robert, and that she might at any moment turn elsewhere for the love denied her by her rightful husband — for life without love was insupportable to Joan's passionately affectionate nature.

Old King Robert — Robert the Wise, as he is commonly styled — was buried behind the high altar in the Church of Santa Chiara that he had built himself; where his splendid Gothic tomb may be seen to this day, having on it his likeness both as King and as Franciscan monk; for he was a Tertiary of Franciscans and died, as

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

becomes one, in their uniform. In the same Church are to be found the tombs, too, of many of the actors in the tragedy of Queen Joan; of her father and mother and her little sister Maria; and of Maria's children by three successive husbands, together with the graves of Charles of Durazzo and of Raimondo Cabano, the Seneschal. And here, in passing, I would like to say that there are no Churches in the whole world that can compare with the old Churches of the city of Naples for the number and the beauty and the poignant interest of the tombs that these contain.

Some days after King Robert's burial in Santa Chiara, Joan was approached by Filippa Cabano with a request that she would create Filippa's son, Robert, Grand Seneschal of the Kingdom in succession to his father, who was but shortly deceased; also, that he might receive the title of Count of Eboli. To both these outrageous demands the young Queen at first turned a deaf ear; not until Filippa — who was accompanied by Robert in person — threatened to make known to all the world the fact of Joan's new intrigue with Bertrand d'Artois did the young Queen surrender to her demands. It would seem that Filippa had, for some time, suspected the cooling of Joan's fondness for her son; and so had determined to obtain from her for Robert a commanding and unassailable position in the State.

In that same State of Naples, then, there were already two increasingly definite factions, each with a different aim: the party of the Dominican Father Robert and of the Hungarian nobles, that sought to bring about the supremacy of King Andrew and the subjugation of Queen Joan; and the party of Donna Filippa, with their programme of "Naples for the Neapolitans"—that is,

QUEEN JOAN OF NAPLES

firstly, of securing sole sovereignty for the Queen, and, secondly, of making the Queen herself the puppet of their own will and the instrument of their aggrandisement.

And round about these openly contending factions there prowled, watchful and ruthless, Charles of Durazzo, seeking only the opportunity to make himself master of the situation. There were no lengths to which Duke Charles was not prepared to go in order to attain his aim and to satisfy the ambition that devoured him; no crime, however frightful, from the contemplation of which he shrank as a means to his end. Cost what it might, he would be King of Naples and of Jerusalem. The chroniclers describe him as a pale man with close-cropped hair and a thick beard; and, when agitated, he had a trick of frowning. Charles of Durazzo had felt greatly aggrieved at the bestowal of Joan's hand in marriage upon Andrew of Hungary; for he, Charles, had been the nearest in blood of all King Robert's nephews to the throne, and to him, as such, Joan ought to have been given. But never for an instant had he allowed so much as a glimpse of his disappointment to be seen by any one; never once had he suffered a breath of complaint to escape him.

Nevertheless, his resolve was only the stronger for the iron self-discipline of the man; and, now that Joan was Queen, the hour was come for him to try the first of the two alternatives by which he was to achieve his object. He was still a bachelor, and Joan had found favour in his eyes by reason of her loveliness; therefore, before having recourse to the other expedient that he had laid out for himself in case of need, Charles had determined to attempt the enlistment of Joan's coöperation in his designs.

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

With this object he obtained a private audience of the Queen, and straightway proceeded to lay siege to her sympathies by every kind of flattery and the most skilful hints of the dangers that threatened her from the side of ungrateful and grasping favourites. Though he named no names, yet Joan understood only too well whom he meant and could not help evincing signs both of her comprehension and of her agreement with him. From that he went on to speak more particularly of the popular rejoicing at her succession to the throne; and, finally, of the universal regret that she should be compelled by an unkind fate to share that throne with one in every way unworthy both of herself and of it.

Seeing clearly who it was to whom he referred in these terms, Joan attempted feebly to protest; but was powerless to prevent him from continuing with what he had to say of the certainty he felt that, if Andrew of Hungary were ever to be admitted to an actual share in the government, the people of Naples would infallibly rise in arms against him and the detested Hungarians who surrounded him. It would, indeed, Duke Charles assured the unhappy Queen, be only another instance of the Sicilian Vespers; the Neapolitans would, of a surety, rise up as one man and exterminate their foreign oppressors, including Andrew himself and the monk whose mistaken counsels had inspired him with so suicidal an ambition.

“ But of what fault do they accuse Andrew? ” asked Joan, uncertainly.

In reply, the Albanian said that the people hated the Prince for his stupidity, his coarseness, and savagery; that the nobles accused him of violating their privileges

QUEEN JOAN OF NAPLES

and of surrounding himself to their detriment with the basest adventurers; and that, lastly, he himself, Charles of Durazzo, accused Andrew of making Joan's life a misery to her.

And then, before she could recover from her amazement at his boldness, Charles wound up by offering to remove Andrew from her path by murdering him; whereupon, the better part in Joan triumphing for a moment over the lower side of her nature, she dismissed Charles angrily from her presence, calling him coward and insolent. Without undue haste or appearance of anger, Charles left her, merely reminding her that it was not altogether impossible that, some day, it should be his turn to condemn and hers to be judged.

So that Duke Charles, having failed in his attempt to obtain Joan's consent to the murder of Andrew, must instead have recourse to the second of the alternatives that had presented themselves to him.

This was to make himself the husband of the next heir to the throne — the thirteen-year-old Maria, sister of Queen Joan. On reaching his own palace, therefore, he sent for a notary, one Nicholas of Melazzo, whose fate he held in his hands by means of a certain knowledge, and ordered him to draw up a contract of marriage between the Princess Maria, his cousin, and himself, Charles of Durazzo. This the notary, albeit terrified at the audacity of the thing (seeing that Maria, as will be remembered, was intended by the terms of King Robert's will to be the wife of either King Louis of Hungary or of the Duke of Normandy), consented to do;

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

and then Duke Charles ordered him at the same time to seek out Tommaso Pace, the valet of King Andrew and the notary's own closest friend, and to find out if Pace had been approached at all by any of Queen Joan's partisans with a view to drawing him into any plot against Andrew's life. For, as Charles argued, if such a conspiracy should ever arise, those concerned in it would be almost sure to endeavour to win over the King's valet to their undertaking in order the more easily to carry it into effect.

From that day on it was noticed that a complete change had taken place in the manner of the Duke of Durazzo towards King Andrew—or, to give the latter the only title hitherto accorded to him, the Duke of Calabria. For, whereas hitherto Charles had shown himself the reverse of friendly towards Andrew, and had been ever the loudest in his denial of Andrew's right to be crowned King of Naples, he now overwhelmed the Hungarian with every kind of courtesy and friendly advance. Charles even took pains to propitiate Andrew's shadow, the honest Dominican, excusing himself to Father Robert for his outrageous conduct in proclaiming Joan alone as their new Queen to the people of Naples by pleading the necessity of making an apparent concession to the popular dislike of the Hungarian element in the kingdom. He did not hesitate to declare to Father Robert his detestation of the persons who were bent upon estranging the young Queen from her husband for their own ends; finally he concluded by placing what power he possessed at the monk's disposal for the purpose of defeating the machinations of Joan's treacherous favourites directed against her rightful husband and the legal partner of her throne.

QUEEN JOAN OF NAPLES

To these assurances Father Robert lent a willing, although not an entirely believing, ear; for he could only attribute the change in Duke Charles to some misunderstanding with the young Queen. At the same time, Charles and Andrew of Hungary were become the closest of comrades; never, now, was Andrew seen in public without his Albanian cousin by marriage; never did he withdraw himself from the circle of his friends to the seclusion of his apartments but Charles of Durazzo walked at his elbow.

And so things went on for a while, until at length the whole Court was ranged definitely on one side or on the other: on that of Queen Joan and the Neapolitan people itself to whom Andrew and his followers were entirely odious, or, else, on that of Andrew and those who hoped eventually to make him sole sovereign of Naples to their own advantage — the Hungarian “Heyducs,” the Count of Altamura, and their kind.

The war of the factions had begun by the omission of Andrew’s name from all the proclamations, warrants, and so forth issued by the Queen in her own sole name. In retaliation for this indefensible slight, Andrew had ordered his followers to break open all the prisons within reach and to liberate their tenants, criminal or otherwise, in his name alone and in honour of his succession to the throne of Naples. He had also loaded the members of his own party — and especially the execrated Altamura — with honours and riches by means of patents signed by himself, only, as the one supreme temporal authority in the kingdom. It may be added that, in all these arbitrary and illegal measures, so admirably calculated to arouse the bitterest anger and the most murderous hatred of the Queen’s supporters against him,

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

Andrew of Hungary's one confident adviser was none other than his evil genius, Charles of Durazzo. From that moment the party of Joan, led by the Counts of San-Severino, Mileto, Terlizzi, Balzo, Morcone, Catanzaro, and Sant' Angelo, and, more especially, by the Queen's ex-favourite, Robert of Cabano, Count of Eboli, and his successor in her affections, Bertrand d'Artois, was resolved upon ridding the land of Andrew and of his minions. Of all the angry barons who had rallied to Joan's support, the last mentioned, Bertrand d'Artois, really loved her for herself, and was actuated by no motive of personal gain, except — alas! — his lawless hope of becoming united to her in matrimony once her husband were removed from the path of his criminal passion. In vain his father, the brave and noble Charles of Artois, one of the regents of the kingdom, strove to dissuade him from the perilous course of a love as treasonable as it was immoral; nothing was of any avail to hold back the young man from the pursuit of his designs.

More successful, however, was the restraining influence of another parent over another child in the same situation — the influence of the Empress of Constantinople over her youngest-born, the handsome Louis of Taranto, who, in deference to his mother's entreaties, turned away his eyes as well as he could from his lovely, ill-mated cousin.

After the rupture between Joan and the Duke of Durazzo, many weeks elapsed without her either meeting him or hearing much of his doings, beyond that he was become the inseparable comrade of her husband; al-

QUEEN JOAN OF NAPLES

though, indeed, at times she cannot have helped wondering what shape his enmity towards her might eventually assume.

One radiant morning of spring, however, as she was in her room in the Castel Nuovo, looking out over the town and the sea beyond, all shimmering in the sunlight, towards Sorrento, there came a knock on the door, and Donna Filippa Cabano, mother of the Grand Seneschal, entered precipitately, her face blanched with alarm and anger, to say that Princess Maria, Joan's little sister, was nowhere to be found.

A short while previously the child had been playing happily by herself in the castle grounds; and then, soon afterwards, she had simply disappeared, none could say where or in what direction.

Joan's consternation may be more easily imagined than described. Her love for Maria was the one perfectly innocent, unspoilt love of her whole existence, the very tenderest spot in all her heart. And now Maria was gone from her; the horror and grief of it were such that she shrieked as though a live coal had been laid upon her breast. That, however, was only in the first anguish of her loss; recovering herself quickly, she broke out in a storm of anger upon those responsible by their want of vigilance for the catastrophe; such was the Queen's fury, indeed, that Filippa fled from her in fear for her life. Instantly, the whole castle was in an uproar, its inhabitants scouring every nook and cranny, indoors and out; but without success; and, presently, the whole city of Naples was bent distractedly upon the same quest, hunting high and low for the beloved little girl. All, though, was in vain; and, albeit, during that day and many days and nights to follow the search was diligently

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

pursued, yet, in spite of every effort, no trace could be found of the lost Princess.

The only drop of comfort vouchsafed to Joan, during all those weary hours of agonising anxiety, came from Bertrand d'Artois, who had been led, somehow, to suspect the agency of the Duke of Durazzo in respect to Maria's disappearance; a drop, however, that Joan refused to accept, saying that such a thing was beyond the bounds of probability. For no one, even, of Duke Charles' household, let alone the Duke himself, had so much as set foot within the castle precincts since the day when he had left the place in anger. No stranger, even, had set foot, that morning of Maria's disappearance, inside the gates, except Nicholas of Melazzo, for whose integrity Tommaso Pace, Prince Andrew's own body-servant, was willing to answer on his life.

In this manner a month went by, bringing to Joan despair of ever seeing her sister again, until on April 30, 1343, there occurred an event so amazing as to deprive her at first of every other sensation; until her astonishment turned to fury at the insolent daring of it. On first learning of it, she refused to believe it, and then, as the certainty of it took the place of incredulity, her indignation knew no bounds.

For, on the stroke of noon of that day, she learned that her sister had become the legal wife of Charles of Durazzo, having been publicly married to him at an altar erected in the open air and in sight of all the people before the Church of Saint John by the Sea, not a bow-shot distant from the great gates of the Palazzo Durazzo. The marriage had been solemnised by Duke Charles' chaplain, the necessary dispensation for the marriage of cousins, one of them being a minor, having been received

QUEEN JOAN OF NAPLES

from Rome the day before; and, at its conclusion, the newly wedded pair had faced the spectators hand in hand, and had solemnly declared that they took one another as husband and wife, calling upon God and the people to bear witness to it. Their announcement had been acclaimed with tumultuous vociferations of applause and delight; after which the Duke and Duchess of Durazzo received the Papal benediction, prior to being escorted in procession round the city by their men-at-arms and the sympathetic populace to the beating of drums and the blowing of trumpets.

So that Charles of Durazzo was now the husband — and it need hardly be said, the master — of the thirteen-year-old heir to the throne. And when, after curbing the useless rage in her heart, Joan summoned the pair to receive her congratulations, she realised her folly in quarrelling with that all-daring and remorseless man; also, she understood that nothing short of the throne itself — let the price be what it might — would ever satisfy his lust of power and glory and hate.

Thenceforth, the temptation of Joan to be, in very truth, at once the real ruler of her own dominions and, at the same time, the arbiter of her own destiny, increased and grew to terrific powers; the desire to satisfy her wishes absolutely in everything became a kind of diabolical possession, sweeping away every consideration of virtue and of mere worldly prudence; save only when, in rare intervals of reaction, she would fall upon her knees in the solitude of her chamber, her face in her hands, sobbing as though her heart would break with the horror of her situation.

CHAPTER XII

A MEDIÆVAL NIGHTMARE

Pact Between Charles and Andrew of Hungary—Joan's Homage to the Papal Legate—Andrew Ignored—Arrival of Andrew's Mother—Andrew Upheld by the Pope—His Reprisals—“The Man Must Die”—The Queen's Conspiracy—Last Meeting of Charles and Andrew—The Hunting Expedition—The Banquet in the Monastery—The Murder—Tempest Breaks Over Joan's Head—An Evil Blow at Charles—Trial of Andrew's Murderers—A Nightmare of Cruelty and Fear.

TO judge from the sequence of events, it would appear almost certain that, in his amazing marriage with Princess Maria, Charles of Durazzo must have had the assistance — or, at least, the tacit approval — of Andrew of Hungary; and that, in return for this, Charles had promised Andrew that he would take his part and support him against the faction of the Queen. Certain it is, at all events, that, immediately after the marriage of Charles and Maria, the party of Andrew, his Hungarian barons and soldiers, redoubled in arrogance towards the Neapolitans, and their excesses of violence and rapine which, erstwhile, had been subjected to an intermittent restraint, now became such as to evoke not only complaints, but threats as well on the part of the unfortunate people. Andrew himself, however, took no notice of such protests, but appeared, rather, to approve the outrages committed by his underlings.

And as certain was it in the opinion of his enemies that the time was come when they might strike him with propriety as well as with impunity.

On August 31, 1344, Queen Joan came, surrounded

A MEDIÆVAL NIGHTMARE

by her friends, to the Church of Santa Chiara, there to do homage for her crown to the Papal legate, Cardinal San Martino de Monti; for the kingdom of Naples, having been bestowed by the Pope upon the House of Anjou after the deposition by them of that of the Hohenstaufen, was considered as a fief of the Church.

By this ceremony the claims of Andrew of Hungary to a share in the throne were formally ignored, and the single sovereignty ceremoniously confirmed to Joan; for her husband was in no way admitted to join with her in the act of homage, nor was there any reference to him by word or deed from first to last; thereafter, his position in the realm was that of its first subject and nothing more. In fact, he was simply the Prince Consort of Naples. During the ceremony — for he, like Joan, had come to it with a numerous armed retinue — the followers of the husband and wife not only kept up a brisk exchange of threats, but had actually to be prevented by repeated energetic commands from drawing their swords then and there. When it was over, and Andrew had returned to the Castel Nuovo, his heart on fire with rage and humiliation and disappointment, his first act was to despatch a message to his mother, Elizabeth of Poland, informing her of his resolution to depart forthwith from the country which offered him nothing but deception and betrayal.

Many months passed away, however, without either his carrying out his avowed intention or any answer reaching him from his mother; for, had he meant what he said in the letter, the letter would never have been written at all; but he would have gone himself instead of sending it. So he had hesitated in his choice of a course of action; and, hesitating, was lost.

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

In place of a return letter, his mother came to fetch him away with her on the vessel in which she had sailed from the port of Danzig; and no sooner was it known what she had come to do than there went up a sigh of thankfulness from all the Court, most especially from those who by her advent saw themselves delivered from the detestable necessity of assassinating the Hungarian Prince in order to insure their own safety from his jealousy and resentment. At once, too, the friends — or, rather, the party — of Joan set themselves to convince the Queen of Poland of their amiable intentions towards her ungracious son by overwhelming her with all manner of undesired civilities and entertainments. But nothing could procure them the confidence of the terrified mother, or turn her from her purpose of removing Prince Andrew from their midst.

The only person, though, who expostulated with Queen Elizabeth for her project of withdrawing her son from Naples was his courageous and resolute tutor, the Dominican, Father Robert, who implored her to have patience and courage for a little while until he should have received from the Pope, who was then living at Avignon, an answer to the entreaty despatched so long before and in which Prince Andrew's claims to be the King of Naples — in accordance with the wishes of the deceased King Robert — had been submitted to the judgment of the Holy Father with an entreaty that he would ratify them.

But all that Father Robert could obtain from the thoroughly terrified Elizabeth was a delay of three days, at the expiration of which time, unless a favourable answer had been received from the Pope, she would set sail once more for Danzig, taking Prince Andrew with her.

A MEDIÆVAL NIGHTMARE

Not until the evening of that momentous third day, as she was completing her preparations for departure, did the Dominican come hurrying into Elizabeth's presence, having in his hands a sheet of parchment from which swung a seal upon a cord.

"Now, God be thanked!" he cried, proffering her the parchment. "You see for yourself, Madam — the Holy Father consents, and your son is King of Naples and of Jerusalem! And, if I may say so, I think it is owing to me more than to any one else!"

And he went on to explain to the delighted Elizabeth how, without mentioning it to any one, he had taken on himself the responsibility of promising that certain laws prejudicial to the Church in the Kingdom of Naples should be abolished if the Pope would confirm the crown to Andrew of Hungary. At this juncture Andrew himself entered the room and was informed of the change in his situation by being hailed as King of Naples by the Dominican. At once the young man's whole nature leapt out to grasp the splendour of his new power in an outburst of revengeful exaltation over those who had hitherto insulted and belittled him. Now, as he swore, they should indeed have reason to tremble for their former boldness, their contempt and defiance of him!

A few days later Queen Elizabeth sailed away from Naples, her head still full of forebodings; try as she would, she could not shake off the fears that beset her so increasingly for the safety of her son whom she was leaving behind with none but a handful of foreign adherents in the midst of a Court and of a people bent, as she felt certain, upon his destruction.

But these misgivings were in no wise shared by Andrew of Hungary, who now proceeded without loss of

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

time to carry out his intention of punishing his seditious subjects.

The first of those upon whom his hand fell was one of the chief Councillors of the Kingdom, a certain Andrew of Isernia, who had been chiefly concerned in persuading Queen Joan—who had looked upon him as a father—to set at naught the provisions of King Robert's will and to let herself be proclaimed the sole ruler of Naples to the detriment of her husband.

In passing be it said that, instead of at once making public the Pope's recognition of him as King of Naples, with, of course, absolute rights of life and death over its people, Prince Andrew had chosen to keep the fact of his kingship a secret for a little time in order the better to enjoy the grim jest of his opponents' ultimate discomfiture when they should learn of his real power over them. Nevertheless, in the meantime, he had not been able to resist tasting the fruits of sovereignty in the shape of an "*hors d'œuvre*" to his banquet of reprisals; with the consequence that Andrew of Isernia was found dead one morning, near the Porta Petruccia of the city, bathed in blood, with a score of sword wounds on his body.

The news of Isernia's murder was brought to Joan by Bertrand of Artois, who had learned also of Andrew's confirmation as King by the Pope, as well as of the fact that a list of persons to be summarily dealt with had been drawn up by the Hungarian; and, supremely, that his, Bertrand of Artois', name was the first upon the list.

This last item it was that finally removed any lingering scruples from Joan's heart; for she loved Bertrand with all the passionate recklessness of her fiery nature, and the thought that his handsome head should roll upon

A MEDIÆVAL NIGHTMARE

the board of a scaffold maddened her against Andrew.

“That decides it,” she is said to have declared to her lover. “The man must die.”

And, when he left her, Bertrand of Artois went out to gather together the others who were also of his conspiracy in the Queen’s service — Robert of Cabano, and the Counts of Terlizzi and Morcone; Charles of Artois, the father of Bertrand himself; Godfrey of Marsano, High Admiral of the realm and Count of Squillace; and the Count of Catanzaro. With these men were allied several women — notably Catherine of Taranto, Empress of Constantinople, mother of that Louis whose beauty was splendid like the sun; Filippa, the mother of Robert of Cabano and of his sisters, the Countesses of Morcone and Terlizzi; those two dusky beauties themselves; and finally Donna Cancia, the laughing girl-demon and bosom-friend of the Queen.

To these was joined that same Tommaso Pace, valet to Prince Andrew, with whom the notary, Master Nicholas of Melazzo, had of late maintained the closest of relations in obedience to the orders of Charles of Durazzo. No wonder, then, that within an hour after the conference of the plotters Charles of Durazzo was in possession of every detail of it, as well as of the names of the plotters themselves.

Now, before the actual ceremony of Andrew of Hungary’s proclamation as King could take place, it was unavoidable that a few days should be devoted to making all suitable preparations for that event; for, so soon as Isernia’s killing had become known, Andrew had caused it to be announced that the murder was not a murder at all in reality, but merely a legal execution duly carried out by the person — a certain Conrad de Gotis — empow-

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

ered to do so by Andrew himself as King of Naples by favour of the Pope. The unrest and uproar caused by this news in the city were such that Andrew had thought it prudent to retire thence into the neighbouring country until the time were come when, as crowned and anointed King, he should be endowed with a real and efficient majesty, the which he was as yet very far from possessing. In this intention, therefore, he had given out that he would go with the Court for a while upon a hunting expedition into the district between Capua and Aversa.

Charles of Durazzo received a personal invitation from Prince Andrew to join him and the others of the party, but declined on the ground of his wife's being extremely indisposed; this, the last meeting on earth of the two men, took place on the 19th of August in the year 1345, towards evening in a hall of the Castel Nuovo; it is said that, in declining Andrew's invitation, Charles begged him to accept a very fine falcon from among those for which his perch was justly celebrated. The falcon presented by Charles to Andrew may have been a jer-falcon; but I cannot help thinking that, in all likelihood, the bird was a peregrine from the cliffs between Sorrento and Amalfi. With Charles was also Nicholas of Melazzo, from whom he had just been receiving the details of the Queen's conspiracy; and Charles, as he himself understood triumphantly, was thenceforth to be master of the situation in the Kingdom of Naples.

The dawn of the next day saw a numerous cavalcade pass out from the gate of the Castel Nuovo and file slowly down through the city and so out into the misty lowlands towards Melito, where the sport was to begin. The illustrious company was headed by Andrew of Hun-

A MEDIÆVAL NIGHTMARE

gary in person, and beside him rode Queen Joan on a white palfrey; whilst close behind them pressed the throng of those who had sworn to return to Naples only when Andrew should have ceased to breathe. Never before had Andrew shown himself so gay, so responsive to all the delights of life and friendship as on that morning; although he knew that he, as well as the men who rode behind him, had death in his heart — the death of many among those very men who were now preparing to consummate their treachery by murdering him. But they, like Andrew of Hungary, were loud in talk and laughter, exchanging jests incessantly amongst themselves and even, now and again, with their victim himself as he turned in his saddle and threw back to them a challenge of wits.

Of all that festive throng two alone rode silent and preoccupied. Both were women. One of them, the Queen, kept her eyes fixed steadfastly on the landscape before her, from which the vapours were being rapidly scattered and dispelled by the sunrise, so that none might read her thoughts; whilst the other was an elderly German called Isolda, once the nurse of Andrew and now his mother's ambassador, who, like Queen Joan, was too occupied with her own reflections to pay attention to what was going on about her. For old Isolda's heart was heavy with an indefinable presentiment of some evil that threatened her beloved foster-child; and her powerlessness to analyse or to avert it was frightful to the faithful soul of her.

And so the August day grew to its full, hot and windless, and drew on to afternoon and sank to airless evening, whilst hawk after hawk soared into the grey-blue sky all a-quiver with the heat, after heron and duck; or,

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

else, hung poised there, hovering a little before swooping down upon crouching hare or rabbit or partridge. But the main feature of the sport was the hunting of wild boars with hound and spear; at which Andrew of Hungary is said to have been an expert.

At dusk the royal party bent its way towards the town of Aversa, there to pass the night in the monastery of San Pietro a Maiella, a house of Celestine monks; for there was at hand no other building capable of sheltering so many persons and their horses. The choice of a fitting asylum for the Queen and her Consort and their followers was the business of the Grand Seneschal, Robert of Cabano; and he it was who undertook the necessary arrangements; by his orders a bed was prepared for Joan and her husband in a room at the end of a corridor on the third floor of the monastery and about sixty feet above the ground.

That night, the monks having retired long before to their cells, the great refectory of the monastery rang with the jests and laughter of the royal supper-party. Wine flowed in abundance; and none drank more deeply than did Andrew of Hungary; until Robert of Cabano rose and said that a draught of the same wine ought by rights to be given to each of the Hungarian sentries posted outside the monastery to compensate them for keeping their cheerless watch outside in the darkness. Which proposal was carried out with loud applause, in which the sentries who had been called into the hall to drink the health of the royal pair joined heartily, so that the place echoed to the thunderous shouts of "Long live their Majesties, the King and Queen of Naples!"

This feasting and good-fellowship was prolonged to a late hour, until at length the conspirators became impa-

A MEDIÆVAL NIGHTMARE

tient of Andrew's wakefulness, and Bertrand of Artois remarked pointedly that the chances were against any of them rising betimes in the morning after sitting up so late the night before. To which Andrew answered scornfully that, speaking for himself, an hour or two of sleep was amply sufficient, and that in this he hoped he was not alone. But when the Count of Terlizzi expressed a doubt of Andrew's being able to set an example of early rising under the circumstances, the Prince gave a challenge to all present, to be up as soon as he in the morning; after which he withdrew with the Queen to their apartment, and silence soon fell over all the building.

Towards two o'clock there came a knock on the door of the royal bedchamber, followed by a second and a third; at the last of which Andrew sprang out of bed, calling out that he was awake and was coming at once. It is said that Joan, who had not closed an eyelid, was minded to warn her husband of his danger, but thought better of it and kept silence whilst he drew on his clothes and, going to the door, opened it — to find himself confronted by a group of men, including his valet, Tommaso Pace, who had knocked on the door, and Nicholas of Melazzo.

On the instant that Andrew showed himself, Bertrand of Artois, as some say, seized him by his long hair and tried to pull back his head; but he contrived to free himself, exclaiming, "This is a base jest!" Then, perceiving that the intentions of the group were really hostile, he endeavoured to retreat into the room for his sword, but was prevented from doing so by Nicholas of Melazzo, who thrust his dagger for a bolt through the staples of the door, whilst others, led by Bertrand of Artois and

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

Robert of Cabano, flung themselves upon the Prince like a pack of wolves, trying to pull him down. But Andrew, now fighting with all his strength, threw them off, and fled from them, shouting loudly for help, and looking for an avenue of escape.

There was none, however, to be found; and at length, turning and twisting from his assailants, Andrew slipped and fell; so that Bertrand of Artois, the nearest of them, was enabled to grapple with him, on the floor, calling for a certain rope with which to strangle him. This rope, which was of silk twisted with gold threads, they had had made on purpose to kill the Prince with, because of a talisman that he was said to have received from his mother and that was held to render him invulnerable by steel or poison. It seems to me probable that Robert of Cabano had the rope ready in his hands and that, between them, he and Bertrand of Artois contrived to place it about the Prince's neck; for, as Gravena tells us, when Robert of Cabano saw that one of their lot, the Count of Terlizzi, was turning away from the horrid scene, he made him take hold of the rope and help them to draw it tight; saying: "What are you doing, my brother-in-law? Here, take hold—the rope is long enough for each of us to put a hand to it. What we want are accomplices, not witnesses!"

And so, between them all, they dragged Prince Andrew to a balcony overlooking the garden of the cloister, and, lifting him up, threw him over, so that he was hanged. And when they knew that he was dead they let go of the rope; and the body fell down into the moonlit garden; and they went away to their beds.

But the din of the murder had awakened Andrew's old nurse, Isolda, who now, looking out of her window,

A MEDIÆVAL NIGHTMARE

saw him lying there and thought that he was asleep. Going to the Queen's room, the door of which was fastened on the inside, she called out to Joan, saying that the Prince was asleep in the garden. To which Joan only made reply, "Let him sleep," and would not speak further. Then Isolda went and awakened the monks and made them go with her into the garden to where Andrew lay on the grass; and, when she saw that he was dead, she rent the night with her lamentations. And two of the monks knelt down by the corpse, one at the head and the other at the feet, and said the Penitential Psalms for the repose of the Prince's soul, while two other monks went up to the door of the Queen's room and asked of her through it:

"Oh, Queen, what are your commands that we should do with the dead body of your husband?"

But she would not return any answer to them; so they went away again, very greatly affrighted and troubled in spirit. And later they sent others of their company once and twice on the same business; but Joan either would not or could not speak with them, until at last the townspeople of Aversa gathered about the monastery gates, began to howl and to murmur amongst themselves, calling the Queen a murderer and saying that she was afraid to look upon the face of her dead husband. Nor did she show herself at all to them; but, later in the day, was borne out of Aversa and so back to Naples in a closed litter guarded by horsemen.

And now, at last, the tempest which had been brewing for so long in silence broke into lightning over the head of Joan.

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

Charles of Durazzo, who as husband to the heir to the throne, was now, next to Joan herself, the most considerable person in the kingdom — and, further, by reason of all he knew, far the most powerful — now took the chief direction of its affairs.

After leaving the body of Andrew of Hungary where it lay exposed for two whole days to the battering of the elements — for the weather had suddenly turned wet and gusty — at the foot of the monastery wall at Aversa, in order thereby to arouse to the full the compassion of the populace that flocked to behold it, as well as to arouse their indignation against the murderers, Charles ordered the remains to be brought in state to the Cathedral of San Gennaro in the city. There having rallied to him the dead Prince's Hungarian barons, together with the Count of Altamura, he met the funeral procession and caused the coffin containing the body to be placed upon a catafalque, by which he took his stand.

“Oh, people of Naples, gentle and simple alike, behold your King, miserably strangled by his murderers!” he cried, drawing his sword and laying it upon the coffin. “I appeal to you to help me avenge him!”

And immediately the vast church rang and echoed with the roar of those to whom he addressed himself.

“Vengeance!” they bellowed, forgetting in their desire for savagery how, but a short while before, they had groaned beneath the insolent brutality of that same Andrew of Hungary. “Vengeance, vengeance, vengeance!” — and from out the sombre interior of the Cathedral the roaring gushed in a flood of terrible sound, filling all the streets with its clamour for blood. And, when the funeral was over, and the coffin had been put away in the place prepared for it in the left transept of

A MEDIÆVAL NIGHTMARE

the building, Duke Charles withdrew once more to his own palace, well pleased with what he had done, there to apply his energies to the work in hand.

Now it so happened that several of those who had conspired with Joan to make an end of her husband had lost no time in claiming the various rewards that they deemed to be due to them from her. Filippa Cabano and Robert, her son, as well as her daughters of Terlizzi and Morcone and their husbands, redoubled in arrogance and in the daring of their clamour for honours and money; whilst Cancia, their lascivious instrument and the handmaid of their Sovereign, now secured from punishment by that Sovereign's impotence even to protest against her shamelessness, turned the Castel Nuovo into a place without a name. But of all Joan's fellow-conspirators the one who asked her the most staggering price was her aunt, Catherine of Taranto, Empress of Constantinople, who asked that she should consent to announce her betrothal to Robert of Taranto, the Empress' eldest son. To this insolent demand Joan could only summon sufficient strength to reply by asking a delay of three days, in which to make up her mind upon the subject; which delay was granted her, the Empress only stipulating that Prince Robert, in the meantime, should be allowed to take up his quarters in the Castel Nuovo and to see and speak with Joan at least once a day.

No sooner, though, did it reach the ears of Charles of Durazzo that Robert of Taranto was installed in the Castel Nuovo as a preliminary to his betrothal to the Queen than the Duke flung himself on to a horse and galloped furiously to the castle. On entering Joan's presence, he spoke briefly and to the point. To begin

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

with, she must create him Duke of Calabria in his own right, thereby acknowledging him to be the heir to the throne as the husband of her sister. And, as to Robert of Taranto, Charles absolutely forbade her to marry him or any other man without his express permission; threatening that, if she dared to do otherwise, he would reveal to the whole world his knowledge of her participation in the murder of Andrew of Hungary. This he did because he had no intention, whatsoever, of allowing her to marry again and so providing, possibly, a direct heir to the throne other than his wife and himself. And again, Joan, helpless to refuse beneath her burden of remorse and of terror both for herself and for others, had no choice but to temporise as best she could.

There was now no other course open to her than that of an explanation upon the subject of her situation with the Empress of Constantinople.

The latter, however, on learning of Duke Charles' opposition to the marriage of her son to Joan, declared her resolution of striking him a blow that should assuredly wound him frightfully both in his affections as well as in the esteem of the public before whom, she assured Joan, he would be eternally dishonoured by it in the event of his refusing to listen to the voice of reason.

First of all, advised the Empress, Charles must be made acquainted with the fact that his veto of Joan's espousal to Robert was without reason; for, in very truth, Joan was expecting shortly to become the mother of Andrew of Hungary's posthumous child, who, in the natural course of things, must eventually succeed to the throne of Naples. Should Charles, however, in the face of this persist in placing obstacles in the way of Joan's marriage to Robert, then the blow of which mention had

A MEDIÆVAL NIGHTMARE

been made — albeit the Empress had not divulged its nature, precisely — should be launched upon him. Furthermore, added the Empress, she herself would at once inform Charles of Joan's expectation of soon becoming a mother.

Joan, it must be added, had told her aunt of Charles' knowledge of the persons primarily responsible for Andrew's death; so that the Empress should realise the peril that menaced her at the Duke of Durazzo's hands.

Undeterred, though, by learning of his power over her, Catherine of Taranto betook herself immediately to the Palazzo Durazzo and boldly faced the arch-schemer. In wickedness and courage she was a match for him, and he knew it; so he received her news of the Queen's condition with smooth words very delicately barbed and very poisonous. Thanking the Empress with every show of respectful gratitude for the honour that she had conferred upon him by coming thus in person with the all-important and all-welcome news; for himself he asked only the title of Duke of Calabria, which alone could enable him to watch over Joan's interests properly and those of her child. Should the Queen, he added, see her way to complying with his request, then he should no longer feel it his duty to bring all the accomplices of her husband's murder to justice; since, if Andrew of Hungary's progeny were, in time, to occupy the throne, the murder itself would be rendered in a measure of no effect. In the event of Joan's refusal, however, the enquiry already instituted in regard to the King's assassins would be prosecuted to the bitter end without respect for any one whosoever — an eventuality which as Charles pointed out to the Empress, with a diabolical smile, might be very unpleasant for several of their mutual friends. By which she was

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

made to understand that Charles was perfectly aware of her own share in that detestable transaction.

In answer, the resourceful Empress, careful to appear suitably frightened by Charles' hints, declared her willingness to do all she could to promote his wishes, begging only a little time in which to bring the Queen round to a more yielding frame of mind; a favour that Charles could not help but grant her. And so they parted, with the mutual assurance of a complete understanding.

On returning to the Castel Nuovo, the Empress, having reported what had passed to the unhappy Joan, withdrew to consider her own plan of action in the struggle with Charles of Durazzo. At length, she hit upon a scheme so truly infernal as to claim preëminence over anything that had preceded it in the long list of her iniquities. She would strike her enemy to the heart; she would kill his intellect and break him as surely as with an iron bar upon the wheel, through the one person that he loved and venerated in all the world — his widowed mother, the saintly Duchess Agnes of Durazzo.

Now it chanced that, during those days, Agnes of Durazzo lay sick of a lingering and mysterious malady, the nature of which it was beyond the ability of her physician to determine. In all probability the Duchess' disease was one of an internal tumour; be that as it may, it was in every symptomatic particular only too well adapted to the unspeakable purpose of the Empress, who forthwith set herself to disseminating rumours destructive to the reputation of the good and gentle Duchess. Not satisfied with this alone, moreover, she contrived by a hellish stratagem to deceive even the Duchess' doctor, so that he believed himself justified in imparting his opinion to Charles of Durazzo, in person.

A MEDIÆVAL NIGHTMARE

So that mad horror, as of a lost soul, took possession of Charles, and the desire of the Empress that his mind should become the prey of devils was fulfilled.

The luckless, blundering physician he dismissed curtly from his presence after their interview. An hour later the unfortunate man was discovered in a back street of Naples, stabbed to death,— but not before he had written out, by Charles' orders, the recipe of a certain draught to be administered to his illustrious patient; which thing was done in the evening of the same day.

Shortly afterwards, Charles was hastily summoned to his mother's bedside from the room in which he had spent the rest of that awful day alone with his thoughts after parting from the doctor. On entering that of his mother, her attendants withdrew, leaving the fast-dying woman alone with the son who had destroyed her in the interests of the family honour.

What passed between them no man may say with any certainty; all that is absolutely sure is that, when a few minutes had gone by, the scream of a man in intolerable agony of soul rang out through the stone corridor; and the Duchess' servants, rushing to her room, found her lying dead in the arms of her stricken son, who himself was entreating her frantically to come back to him, sobbing as though his heart would break, and imploring the mercy of Heaven for his misjudgment of her.

From that hour there was something very dreadful in the look of the Duke of Durazzo, as though he were afraid of his own thoughts and were for ever struggling to free himself from their compulsion. The only person who understood a little of what was in his mind was, doubtless, the Empress of Constantinople, and, when she saw that the man was for the first time in all his life the

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

prey of a hideous remorse, she became gradually afraid for herself and for her first-born, Robert of Taranto, for whom she was plotting to secure the hand of the Queen.

Towards the end of the time agreed upon between Joan and the Empress, for the former to make public her betrothal to Robert, who was still living in the Castel Nuovo, and while the whole town was lamenting the mysterious death of the beloved Duchess Agnes of Durazzo, there came to pass a thing which utterly set at naught all the calculations of the Empress and of her eldest son.

It so happened that one day Robert of Taranto had gone out riding with Charles of Durazzo, whom the astute mother of Robert had, since the demise of Duchess Agnes, persuaded her son to conciliate by every possible means in his power. Now both Robert and his mother had overlooked, or were in ignorance of, the surpassing love that Louis of Taranto, the youngest of Robert's two brothers, had for some years borne to Joan; which love Louis had kept in check to the best of his ability while Andrew of Hungary lived. But, now that Joan was a widow and the prize of any man bold enough to snatch it from the rest, Louis of Taranto felt no hesitation in doing so when the opportunity offered.

Therefore, it came about that, on his return to the Castel Nuovo, Robert found himself shut out. Despite his clamour to be admitted, as he termed it, "to his own house" and his threats to exact bloody retribution from the sentries within for keeping him waiting, he received no attention from anybody until his mother came out to him, trembling and confused, to say that in his absence his brother Louis had effected an entry into the castle and had compelled Joan to go through a form of marriage with him.

A MEDIÆVAL NIGHTMARE

The effect of the news upon Robert may be easily imagined. After staring, speechless, at his informant for a few minutes, there broke from him a cry of rage and, turning his horse, he tore off at a gallop towards the Palazzo Durazzo. Here he found Duke Charles in the company of the Duchess Maria and informed them as well as he could, for fury, of what had taken place. It ended in Charles' promising him that he would leave no stone unturned to prevent the necessary confirmation by the Pope of the union of Louis with the Queen; and that, so long as he, Charles of Durazzo, lived, no such confirmation should be put into practice.

That same day he wrote to the Pope at Avignon asking for a Papal enquiry into the murder of Andrew of Hungary and laying before the Holy Father the names of those implicated in it; thus he hoped to obtain the deposal of Joan from the throne and the reversion of it to himself as husband of the next rightful heir, Maria of Anjou; also to insure the destruction of the Empress of Constantinople as a participant in Andrew's death.

It was long before the Pope's answer reached him, and, when at last it did, it was rather disappointing. For Clement VI replied with a Bull dated June 2, 1346, addressed to Beltram des Baux, Count of Monte Scaglioso and Chief Justice of Sicily, bidding him draw up a charge against the murderers of King Andrew — who were formally anathematised — and to punish them with the utmost severity. A secret codicil to the Bull, however, expressly forbade the Chief Justice to proceed against or in any way to implicate in his handling of the case either the Queen herself or any of her relatives. So, to avoid causing still more lamentable disorders in the already distracted kingdom, any such malefactors of the Blood

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

Royal, added the Pope, would be dealt with later by himself, alone, as the Supreme Head of the Church and Suzerain lord of the Kingdom of Naples.

The Count of Monte Scaglioso showed himself no laggard in discharging the duty thus entrusted to his zeal and ability.

Within three days from the reception of the Papal Bull he was able to announce that the trial of the late King's murderers would be held on the following day in the great hall of San Luigi in the Castel Nuovo, the same vast apartment in which Pope Celestino V had abdicated the Pontificate in 1294. In the hall were seats for all the principal nobles of the kingdom round about that of the Chief Justice himself. The two accused persons were both men — Tommaso Pace, King Andrew's valet, and Nicholas of Melazzo, the confederate of Charles of Durazzo and the same who had played the part of Judas as well as that of "Omri who slew his master." Both were brought from their prison to the Castel Nuovo to undergo a preliminary torture that should make them confess their guilt at once and so save the time and trouble of their judges.

On the way from the prison to the palace the accused passed by Charles of Durazzo, to whom the wretched notary whispered, it is said, a promise to reveal nothing of what had formerly passed between them on condition that Charles would provide for the other's widow and orphans; to which the Duke assented with a nod of the head.

And Nicholas of Melazzo kept his word; for, during all the torments to which he was presently subjected, he held his mouth and played the man. But with the valet it was very different; no sooner did Tommaso Pace feel

A MEDIÆVAL NIGHTMARE

his arms being dislocated at the shoulder in the torture known as that “of the Cord” than he shrieked for mercy, swearing to tell everything and imploring to be conducted before his judges. And now there ensued the first of a series of hellish scenes that were to follow each other in the drama of mediæval reprisal, that nightmare of cruelty and fear.

As the two prisoners were being taken from the cell where they had been tortured to the hall of San Luigi, up a narrow, winding stairway, the Count of Terlizzi, who was bringing up the doleful procession with several of his men-at-arms — he having been present at the torturing of both the accused, and being in terror of what Tommaso Pace might be about to reveal — suddenly sprang upon the valet (who was walking behind Nicholas of Melazzo and their gaolers) and with the help of one of his soldiers dragged him back into an embrasure of the stairway and there, taking him by the throat, forced him to put out his tongue, which they cut out with a knife. Then, pushing the fainting wretch before them, they rejoined the procession; but not before Pace’s howls had drawn the attention of Charles of Durazzo, who, like Terlizzi, had been a witness of what had taken place in the torture-chamber. So struck was he by the horrid energy of Terlizzi’s act, and understanding its purport as he did, Charles fell for an instant beneath the spell of the very danger which he had so laboriously created for the removal of Joan and Louis of Taranto from his path. It may be that there rang in his ears, together with the miserable valet’s inarticulate protests, the words of the Psalm —“he hath digged a pit for others and is fallen into it himself”; at any rate, he glanced at Nicholas of Melazzo and, halting the pro-

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

cession, drew him aside to where they could speak without being overheard. And Nicholas, reading the half-formed purpose in his face, once more whispered his promise of secrecy. Whereupon Charles, recovering his courage, promised on his part to take care of the notary's family, adding a command that Nicholas should name every person concerned in the King's assassination to the Chief Justice, excepting Charles himself, and the Queen and the members of the royal family.

This command Nicholas obeyed implicitly; but when the Chief Justice began to question Tommaso Pace for a confirmation of the notary's evidence, the mutilated valet could only open his mouth and point to where his tongue had been.

Nevertheless, the Chief Justice ordered the immediate arrest of such of the conspirators as were present in the hall of San Luigi — Robert of Cabano and the Counts of Morcone and Terlizzi, the last of whom had thus gained nothing by his barbarity upon Tommaso Pace. Of the other conspirators, Filippa Cabano and her two daughters, together with Donna Cancia, were thrown into prison immediately afterwards; and the rest, the Lords Mileto, Catanzaro, and Squillace, being warned in season, saved themselves by flight; old Charles of Artois and his son Bertrand being still secure in their fortress of Sant' Agata of the Goths, near what was probably the real site of the Caudine Forks and from which, centuries later, the last Father of the Church, St. Alphonsus Liguori, was destined to take his episcopal title as Bishop of Sant' Agata; where he died in the year 1788.

And, when Nicholas of Melazzo had concluded his testimony, he was sentenced, with his accomplice, Tommaso Pace, to be dragged at the tail of a horse through-

A MEDIÆVAL NIGHTMARE

out the town and then hanged by the neck in the Mercato, the great market square, in which square Conradien of Hohenstaufen and Frederick of Baden had been decapitated by order of Charles I of Anjou in 1268, after the battle of Tagliacozzo. It was in this same square of the Mercato that Masaniello's rebellion broke out, in the Seventeenth Century; and here took place also the execution of the misguided Liberals in 1799.

The sentence upon the notary and the valet having been forthwith carried into effect, the other prisoners were on the following day taken out of the Castel Nuovo and conveyed on to a galley in the bay, their hands tied behind their backs and having each a hook passed through their tongue to prevent them from calling out any mention of some forbidding name in passing to the crowd. When they had been tortured on the galley — a precaution for which the Count of Monte Scaglioso would seem to have been answerable — and their depositions against one another duly written down and signed, needless to say they were, one and all, condemned to be burned alive.

The next morning the crowd (composed mainly of descendants of the slaves of the long-ago Romans) filled all the ways from the prison to the Mercato, where on the side towards the Church of Sant' Eligio — the usual spot on which executions usually took place being before the other Church in the piazza, the ancient Church of Santa Croce — was erected a huge pile of wood and many bundles of twigs about a number of posts with staples to them. This was the pyre.

From an early hour the populace had been swarming the city, tossed and churned hither and thither by its ravening for blood — no matter of whom — and by its impatient excitement for the gratification of its lust of

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

cruelty. At last, however, its waiting was rewarded and there went up to the heavens a roar of pleasure as the prison-gates were thrown open and the spectacle began of the procession to the Mercato. I need not describe it, save to say that all along the way the condemned, each in a separate cart, were tortured in a revolting manner with scourges, razors, and red-hot pincers, so that several succumbed to their sufferings before reaching the pyre intended for them. Amongst those who died thus was Robert of Cabano, Grand Seneschal of the Kingdom, and the only one of them all who refused to utter the least sound by which to betray his torments to the mob. And when, finally, the dying unfortunates were all made fast to the stakes and fire was put to them, that same mob rushed over the intervening soldiers, extinguishing the flames and seizing the still palpitating bodies, tore them in pieces for the sake of the bones, with which to make whistles and dagger-handles.

CHAPTER XIII

THE VAMPIRE-MONARCH FROM HUNGARY

Charles' Further Acts as Dictator—Rise of the Favoured Louis of Taranto—Civil War—A Scheme of the Empress of Constantinople—Interference of the King of Hungary—The Empress Again to the Rescue—Hungary's Advance—Death of the Empress—Flight of the Neapolitan Nobles—Joan and Her Husband in Provence—Charles' Well-merited Fate—The King of Hungary's Vengeance—Government by Execution.

THIS detestable butchery, strictly in accord with the criminal procedure of the day, was but the beginning of a reign of terror in the city and realm of Naples. The murder of Andrew of Hungary was soon no more than a pretext to serve Charles of Durazzo for ridding himself of all persons who, in any way, dared to manifest their disapproval of his assumption of the Dictatorship of the Kingdom or to murmur against his unbearable tyranny. Nor was it long before Louis of Taranto, who by now had completely won the heart of Joan, and was seeking to obtain from the Pope the dispensations necessary to make lawful their irregular union, began to consider the high-handed and arrogant conduct of Charles — whom and all whose works he abominated — as an intolerable affront to himself. In consequence, having armed his retainers and increased his forces as much as he could, Louis raised his standard as King of Naples and Jerusalem and bade his loyal subjects rally to him in opposition to the Albanian usurper of his sovereign rights.

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

In this manner there broke out a regular civil war throughout the country; now the victory inclined to Louis, and now to Charles and his ally, Robert of Taranto, the elder brother of Louis, and the disappointed suitor of Joan. But a day soon came when there was no longer left to Louis any more money; and without money he was naturally helpless to pay his troops. Both he and Joan were in despair, when his mother, the Empress of Constantinople, who was living with them, showed the true mettle of which she was made.

Bidding the young couple take heart, Catherine of Taranto promised solemnly that, if they would but lend her the half of their forces and would content themselves with remaining for a week on the defensive in the Castel Nuovo, she would bring them at the end of that time a treasure such as they had never yet even imagined. To this proposal they perforce consented; and the Empress, leading half her son's army, marched boldly out from Naples by the Porta Capuana, along the road towards Benevento, and so came by way of the Caudine Forks to the castle of Saint Agatha of the Goths, where Queen Joan's former lover, Bertrand of Artois, and his father, old Count Charles, were still skulking from the law.

Now when Count Charles perceived that troops were preparing to besiege him, and recognised their leader as the Empress, he sent out messengers to enquire her intentions in coming thus with a large force into his neighbourhood; to which Catherine replied, speaking as follows (her speech is translated literally) :

“ My most beloved ones (‘Dilettissimi miei’), pray report to our friend Charles that we desire to speak with him privately upon a matter of equal interest to us both; and that he need feel no uneasiness at seeing us come

THE VAMPIRE-MONARCH FROM HUNGARY

thus with an armed force to him, for we have done so expressly for a certain purpose, the which we will explain to him at our leisure. We know that he is confined to his bed with an attack of gout and so we were not surprised that he did not come out in person to greet us. And so pray salute him from us and reassure him as to our intentions towards him; and say that we would fain enter to him — if such be his pleasure — with Master Nicholas Acciajuoli, our privy councillor, and no more than ten of our soldiers, in order to confer with him upon a subject too important to be confided to messengers."

Completely deceived by the pernicious woman's fair words as reported to him, Count Charles sent out his son Bertrand to receive her with all due ceremony, and to escort her to where he himself lay prostrate with illness. Their meeting was cordial in the extreme; after expressing the most heartfelt regrets at the venerable knight's sad condition, the Empress, so soon as they were alone together, lowering her voice, said that her object in so coming to him was to consult him in regard to the state of affairs in Naples and to enlist his active support on behalf of the Queen. At the same time, she went on to say, there being no immediate reason for her return to the capital, she would be more than grateful for the favour of being allowed to remain yet a few days with him at St. Agatha, in order to profit by his advice and to give him some account of all that had come to pass in Naples during his absence.

It ended in Count Charles' head being quite turned by the Empress' flattery; so that he not only begged her to remain his guest for so long as she pleased, but also gave orders for the gates of the castle to be left open so that she might be accessible at all times to her offi-

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

cers, civil and military, that were encamped outside the walls with her army.

But the fatuous credulity of Count Charles was soon undeceived. At a late hour of the following night, the gates of the fortress being still open and its rightful inmates sound asleep for the most part, the foolish old Count was suddenly awakened from his slumbers by the Empress of Constantinople, who, followed by several of her soldiers, entered his room, a dagger in her hand, and, advancing to his couch, seized him by the throat.

“Oh, accursed traitor, you are now going to be punished as you deserve!” she cried. And when he begged only mercy for his son — thinking the Empress had in mind to slay them both, lest at any time they should conspire against the kingship of her son, Louis of Taranto — and offered to put her in possession of his entire treasury if only she would spare the life of his adored son, to all his entreaties she answered only that he must prepare to part for ever from his son, whom she had decided to send away to the castle of Malfi; and that, as for Count Charles himself, the probability was that he would end his days in the dungeons of that of St. Agatha of the Goths. Prior to pronouncing these sentences, however, she had compelled him to show her where his immense treasures were concealed behind the wall of his bedchamber — a veritable Aladdin’s cave of gold in bars and in plate and of precious stones.

The chronicler, Domenico Gravina, relates how that a few days later Count Charles was found dead in his prison, the lips covered with a bloody froth, and the wrists all gnawed away — so we may suppose him to have died either of rage or of some corrosive poison; or, very likely, of both. And not long afterwards his son

THE VAMPIRE-MONARCH FROM HUNGARY

Bertrand, in despair, hanged himself from a grating in the vault at Malfi, into which he had been transferred by order of Catherine of Taranto.

But retribution, as condign as it was merited, was about to fall upon the head of that wicked woman.

On returning, laden with her ill-gotten spoils, to Naples, her triumph was dashed to the ground to learn that, during her absence, Charles of Durazzo, her ancient enemy and that of her house, had once more sent word to Joan, demanding that she should instantly create him Duke of Calabria, and so acknowledge him to be the rightful heir to the throne as the husband of her sister Maria. This demand the Queen had rejected with contumely; and Charles, stung to madness by her refusal, had thereupon sent back word to inform her that he had accordingly written to King Louis of Hungary, inviting him to take possession of the kingdom and promising to deliver to him the chief murderers of his brother Andrew, who had so far escaped the just consequences of their iniquity.

It was now indispensable, as Joan saw clearly, to secure the public opinion of Europe to her side in the life-and-death struggle with her implacable foe. Therefore, she sent ambassadors to plead her cause with the Florentine Republic and to exonerate her of the crime generally imputed to her of having caused the murder of her husband. She even wrote in the same sense to the Hungarian King himself; but only received for reply a letter in which Louis of Hungary enumerated the proofs against her — her disordered life both before and after marriage; the exclusive power that she had arrogated to herself; the fact that it had been in no way owing to her exertions that King Andrew's murderers had ever

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

been brought to justice, and that she had so quickly taken another husband in his place—all of which certainly pointed to Joan's aggravated guilt.

Indeed, the King of Hungary had already, on receipt of Charles of Durazzo's letter, written back to accept the offer of the throne and to say that he would at once set about making preparations for coming down to Naples at the head of a large army of Hungarians. For, apart from Charles' invitation to him, King Louis, stirred up by love for his murdered brother, as well as by the tears of their mother, Elizabeth, and the incitement of the Dominican, Father Robert, who, after Andrew's demise, had taken refuge in Budapest, was now entirely bent on avenging his brother to the utmost of his ability.

He had in the past made strong endeavours to obtain from the Pope at Avignon a condemnation of Joan herself and of her accomplices of the Blood Royal, complaining that whereas the less prominent members of the plot against his brother had suffered the just penalty of their sins, yet the principal authors of it had been let to go unpunished; and that Joan herself, the most guilty of all, had been suffered to continue with impunity her career of shameless immorality. To which the Holy Father had answered that the Queen's conduct, both during and after the murder of her husband, was of a surety most blameworthy; but that, no tangible proof of complicity in Andrew's death having been brought against her, he, the Pope, although willing to do justice to all parties in so far as in him lay, could not condemn Joan upon mere hearsay evidence. Should such good and solid evidence be produced before him against her, however, he would not fail to deal with her accordingly; until then he must suspend judgment.

THE VAMPIRE-MONARCH FROM HUNGARY

As before, it was again the Empress Catherine who came to the rescue of the situation in which her son and his wife were now placed by the action of Charles of Durazzo in inviting Louis of Hungary's intervention against them. As she saw clearly, the only thing left for them to do now was to come to terms with their nearest enemy Charles himself, and to bribe him to combine with them against the invader who was already hastening to overwhelm them. Accordingly, she arranged a truce with Charles; and, together with Joan and Louis of Taranto, met him in the gardens of the Castel Nuovo, where it was agreed between him and Joan that he should be created Duke of Calabria and formally acknowledged as the heir to the throne. In return he was to join forces with Joan and Louis against the King of Hungary. So soon as this agreement had been carried out, Charles, who now saw himself within measurable distance of the throne itself, set out from Naples with all the troops that could be spared for the purpose, for the city of Aquila, where the populace was already declaring for Louis of Hungary. With him went also Robert of Taranto, who had become reconciled to his brother Louis in this the hour of the latter's greatest danger. And, just as they departed for Aquila, the Empress Catherine, who was watching the troops defile along the street towards the Porta Capuana, was taken suddenly ill and died, without speaking again, in the evening of the same day.

In the meantime the King of Hungary had already entered Italy from the north, and had struck into the Neapolitan territory on the side of Apulia; and the news of his coming filled the Court of Naples with dismay. For it had been hoped that his progress might have been

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

stayed by a legate whom the Pope had sent to meet him at Fogliano, within a long day's march of the Neapolitan frontier, and to bar the way to him with a threat of excommunication if he dared to advance any further without the permission of the Holy Father; but the Hungarian had refused to pay any attention to Papal remonstrances, and had continued on his way through the States of the Church into the Kingdom of Naples.

On learning of these events Queen Joan, hastily assembling such of the nobles as she knew to be loyal to her, made them swear fidelity to Louis of Taranto, her husband, and then took ship by night in one of her own Provençal galleys for Marseilles, the port of Avignon, which belonged to her—so that she was, in a sense, the landlady of the Pope. So soon, then, as Joan had departed to seek refuge at the Papal Court, Louis of Taranto, taking with him his dead mother's Counsellor, Nicholas Acciajuoli, set out with a small force for the citadel of Capua on the River Volturno, thinking there to check the enemy. Unhappily, though, the Hungarian monarch, obtaining information of his adversary's movements, turned aside, and, marching round the flank of the Neapolitan forces by way of the mountains of Alife and Morcone, seized upon the city of Benevento, in rear of Louis of Taranto's army.

At Benevento, however, the King of Hungary was met by a deputation of Neapolitan subjects, who, frightened by the rapidity of his advance, as well as by the Queen's flight and by the sudden departure of her husband for they knew not what place, had decided to make the best terms they could for themselves with the revengeful newcomer. And so they brought him the keys of the city, and made submission to him as the rightful successor of

THE VAMPIRE-MONARCH FROM HUNGARY

the late King Robert. The news of this event soon reached Louis of Taranto's army, and at once a vile panic set in, and very soon Louis found himself deserted by all save only the faithful, intrepid Acciajuoli; for there was more courage beneath the lawyer's gown than beneath the breastplates of all the army. Resistance to the Hungarian was no longer possible for Louis; and, together with Acciajuoli, he returned to Naples in the evening of the day on which he had learned of the Hungarian's arrival at Benevento. At Naples, Louis was met by his brother Robert and by Charles of Durazzo, both of whom, as well as all his other relations, entreated him to go away at once, lest he should bring down the wrath of the Hungarian upon them and upon the whole city. Turning his back upon the cowards, Louis went down to the seashore and, accompanied as ever by the loyal Acciajuoli, embarked in a crazy, rotten rowing-boat manned by four sailors, thanks to whose devotion he ultimately reached Leghorn; whence he shortly joined Queen Joan in their kingdom of Provence.

The King of Hungary being encamped at Aversa, Charles of Durazzo and Robert of Taranto now repaired there to him with the purpose of turning away his anger from themselves and their families. They were received, to their great consolation and encouragement, with every possible manifestation of benignity; the King even going so far as to enquire after their youngest brothers, Louis of Durazzo and Philip of Taranto, and to express the most lively desire to make their acquaintance as soon as possible. Finally he begged they might be sent for, in order, as he put it, "that he might make his entry into Naples in the midst of all his family." With these requests their elders made all speed to comply, so that,

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

within a few hours, the boy, Louis of Durazzo, and the young man, Philip of Taranto, were with them in the castle of Aversa, the Hungarian headquarters. On their being presented to him, the King embraced them, and chatted with them a little while; after which he made them, with their elder brothers, sit down with him to supper, not parting with them until a late hour of the night.

Now there were with the King of Hungary two noblemen of Naples, Lillo of Aquila and the Count of Fondi, both of them brave and honourable gentlemen and haters of cruelty and treachery. And, when Charles of Durazzo went to bed that night, these came to his bedside and bade him beware, for that the Hungarian was a tyrant and no gentleman and that, for all his fair words, he had only that morning taken council with his followers that he might put Charles himself to death and send the other Neapolitan princes in captivity into Hungary. But to these warnings Charles turned a deaf ear, although Lillo persisted in them and implored him, for the sake of all he held dear in this world, to save himself with his brothers and his cousins; until Charles angrily bade his well-wishers to leave him in peace.

All the next day the demeanour of the King continued the same until the evening, when, as they were all at supper, Charles received yet a last warning of his danger from Lillo of Aquila, who was waiting upon him at table.

“ Oh, why does your Highness refuse to listen to me? ” he whispered. “ Fly — fly — there is still time to save yourself.”

But Charles, irritated by Lillo’s persistency, threatened, unless he held his peace, to repeat his words aloud

THE VAMPIRE-MONARCH FROM HUNGARY

to the King; and Lillo could only bow in submission, whispering as he did so:

“At least, I have done my duty; and now may the will of God be done, likewise, in regard to you.”

At that moment the King rose and confronted Charles, with a terrible countenance; so that the latter was now, at last, rudely awakened from his dream of security.

“Ah, traitor, now I hold you in my hand!” cried the King. “Be sure that I will do justice upon you — full justice — for your crimes,— your daring to march against my city of Aquila — you, by whose invitation I came to give peace to this miserable land that has groaned so long beneath the burden of you and yours.”

He then went on to reproach Charles with having been, together with his mother’s brother, Cardinal de Périgord, the means of postponing the coronation of Andrew, and so of bringing him to his untimely end; furthermore, he accused Charles of designing to obtain the kingdom for himself by his abductive marriage with the Princess Maria, his own, King Louis’, intended bride; which last delinquency had all along rankled fearfully in the King’s mind, so that as he referred to it his voice broke into a shout of fury. And then, turning away from the excuses and pleadings for mercy of his victim, he ordered the Voivode, Stephen of Transylvania, to take charge of all the prisoners and to keep them for the night in a room near his, the King’s, own apartment.

The next day King Louis, having visited that balcony in the Castle of Aversa from which the dead body of his brother Andrew had been hanged and then thrown into the garden below, sent an order to the Voivode Stephen that he was to have Charles of Durazzo brought by soldiers to that same place and that they were to cut

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

his throat; but the King himself did not stay to witness the execution. And when word of the King's order was brought to the Voivode, he told Charles to follow him; and, together with some soldiers, they went out to the room of the balcony. There the Voivode asked of Charles whether he wished to confess his sins to a priest; who answered in the affirmative, and so one of the monks came to him from the monastery, and heard his confession, and absolved him in so far as he was able to do. After which Duke Charles knelt down over against the fatal balcony and commended his poor soul to God, and was killed by having a very sharp knife drawn across his throat (so that his head was nearly severed from his body) by one of the soldiers, whilst another plunged a sword into his heart that he might die quickly. And when the thing was done they threw the dead body of the Duke over the balcony into the garden.

After that, King Louis rode away with all his army from Aversa to Naples, being met on the way by a large deputation of nobles and citizens of whom he took no notice, refusing to acknowledge their greeting or to ride beneath a canopy they had provided for his entry into the capital. On arriving in Naples the King at once gave himself up to the work of vengeance. The first to die was Donna Cancia, who, ever since the death of the other regicides, had been lying in prison; she was burned alive in the Mercato. Soon after Cancia's death the King ordered the arrest of the Count of Squillace, Godfrey of Mansano, promising to spare him if he would deliver up one of his relations, a certain Conrad of Catanzaro, accused of having been among those privy to the murder of Andrew. To this infamy Squillace consented, saving his life by betraying Conrad to the Hun-

THE VAMPIRE-MONARCH FROM HUNGARY

garian authorities, who had him broken alive, as is related, upon a wheel studded with razor-blades,— but I incline to doubt this for more reasons than one. But, instead of assuaging the rage of King Louis, these monstrous executions seem only to have filled him with a further appetite for blood. As during the usurpation of power by Charles of Durazzo after King Andrew's murder, so now executions multiplied to such an extent that they threatened soon to become the principal medium of government; just as, four centuries and a half later, in the time of suppression of 1799, there set in an epidemic of frantic denunciation, the general terror making of society a hot-bed of the basest passions and motives — avarice, cowardice, and hate. And soon the people began to think how they might rid them of the ghastly incubus that had come to prey upon them in the person of the vampire-monarch from Hungary.

CHAPTER XIV

END OF JOAN'S CAREER

Joan Detained at Aix—Greeted as a Queen—Joan Pronounced Innocent—Plans to Regain Naples—Sale of a City—Return to Naples—Indecisive War—Proposal for Personal Conflict—Flight of the Royal Family—Maria's Narrow Escape—Hungarians Repulsed—Pope Clement as Intermediary—Departure of the King of Hungary—Festivity in Naples—Death of Louis and Joan's Further Marital Adventures—Joan in Trouble—Her Utimely End.

IN those days of the King of Hungary's assize in Naples, Queen Joan reached her county of Provence and began to travel across it from Nice, where she had landed, towards Avignon.

On coming to the town of Aix, however, to her astonishment and perplexity, her journey was interrupted by the townspeople, who, albeit they received her with every mark of respect, yet set a guard about the castle of the place, the Château d'Arnaud, in which she stayed; and refused to let her issue thence until, as they said, they should have had word from Avignon—but in regard to what matter they would not tell her at once. Only after two months had gone by did the Archbishop of Aix present himself before her with an explanation. It appeared that, at the very moment of Joan's landing in Provence, news had been brought to Aix that the King of France had sent his son, the Duke of Normandy, to Avignon to negotiate with Joan as to the cession of Provence to the French Crown in exchange for a proportionate territory elsewhere; so that, on seeing Joan arrive thus timely in their midst, the people of Aix imag-

END OF JOAN'S CAREER

ined, not unnaturally, that her presence among them must be connected with the negotiations in question. And, as they were determined to die to the last man rather than pass under the detested rule of the French, they had resolved, if need be, to keep the Queen a hostage among them, in order to prevent her from carrying on the dreaded negotiations. Having however, and to their great thankfulness, received from the Sovereign Pontiff himself an absolute denial of any such purpose of negotiation, they at once and with many apologies restored the Queen to liberty.

On leaving Avignon, what was her delight on seeing the beloved Louis of Taranto come out to meet her, accompanied by all the Cardinals then in attendance upon the Pope! Joan was now, indeed, greeted as a Queen by her people, who strewed the way with flowers, the while a number of mounted pages rode beside the royal pair, holding above them a canopy of crimson velvet; and, from every church the bells pealed out a welcome to the Sovereigns. In the castle they were received with all pomp and circumstance by the Holy Father, who embraced and blessed them; after which they took up their residence in the Ursuline convent; and a little later, to complete the gladness of Joan, her younger sister, Maria, now the mother of two baby girls, arrived at Avignon from the stricken city of Naples. After the death of her husband in the castle of Aversa, Maria, bearing her children in her arms, had taken refuge from the reprisals of the King of Hungary in the monastery of Santa Croce, where the monks took her in and fed and sheltered her during some days, although they knew that not only their lives but the existence of the monastery itself would fall a sacrifice to the Hungarian's anger should he ever learn

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

of their charity to the widow of Charles of Durazzo. At length she had contrived, thanks to the disguise of an old monastic gown, to embark with her babies upon a ship bound for Provence; and her account of the things that were being done by the Hungarian in Naples made both Joan and her husband long to get back there with an army behind them, that they, in their turn, might satisfy their vengeance.

About this time there arrived, too, at Avignon ambassadors from the King of Hungary to the Pope, demanding in no measured terms the formal condemnation of Joan as an accessory before the fact to the murder of her husband, and her deposition from the throne of Naples; and, most especially, that the Holy Father should give the kingdom instead to Louis of Hungary. And now the Pope appointed a day for Joan on which to plead her cause before him and to disprove the charges made against her if she could; and this she did so ably that those who heard her broke into loud applause, and the Pope pronounced her innocent before all the world, and the Hungarian envoys were compelled to go away empty — although, to this day, there are those who have their doubts as to the veracity of Joan's denial of the sin imputed to her. At any rate, Pope Clement, who was a good and truth-loving Pontiff, believed her, and there is an end of it.

After the discomfiture of the Hungarians, the Pope confirmed the marriage of the Queen to her cousin, Louis of Taranto, and bestowed upon the latter the title of King of Naples and of Jerusalem; he had already, on March 27, given him the Golden Rose. Simultaneously, the Holy Father sent an apostolic legate, Cardinal de Boulogne, to the King of Hungary, at Naples, to per-

END OF JOAN'S CAREER

suade him to cede the kingdom peaceably to its rightful sovereigns.

While the Cardinal was engaged on this difficult task, Nicholas Acciajuoli betook himself, likewise, into Naples and set about raising an army wherewith to drive out the Hungarians in the event of their refusing to listen to the Cardinal's arguments. But, to maintain such an army, great expenses were unavoidable; and the Queen, who had sent him in answer to a deputation of Neapolitans entreating her to return and rule over them, was now obliged to raise money by every means at her disposal. For this purpose she sold all her jewels; but, these proving insufficient, she begged the Pope to buy of her the city of Avignon. To this he consented, and on June 19, 1348, gave her for it a sum about equal to sixty thousand pounds of our money. Which amply disproves the statement made by Alexandre Dumas,* who says that the sale took place on the day immediately prior to Joan's trial, suggesting as he does that the Pope's decision was influenced by his eagerness to acquire possession of the city — for the trial was held almost at once after Joan's arrival at Avignon, on March 15.

In the meantime the King of Hungary had declined to accede to the Pope's instance that he should retire from Naples to his own kingdom; and so there was nothing left for Joan and Louis of Taranto to do but to dispossess him at the sword's point. Thanks to the indefatigable efforts of Acciajuoli — and, in perhaps even greater measure, to the misrule of the Hungarian himself — matters were now ripe for an armed intervention in Naples, where every strong place had surrendered to the enemy, with the glorious exception of the castle of

* "Crimes Célèbres: Jeanne de Naples."

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

Melfi, of which Lorenzo Acciajuoli, the son of Nicholas, was the commander. From Melfi, where he had conferred with his son, Nicholas Acciajuoli travelled throughout the country, crying the Queen's acquittal and the confirmation of her union with Louis of Taranto and proclaiming far and wide the great indulgences and blessings promised by the Pope to all who should submit themselves to their lawful rulers, Queen Joan and her consort, King Louis. And, finding himself everywhere greeted with tumultuous declamations of loyalty towards Joan and of detestation of the Hungarian, Acciajuoli returned to the Queen at Avignon with the news that she might safely entrust her cause to her own people.

On September 10, 1348, she left Provence for Naples, accompanied by her husband and her sister and the counsellors, Acciajuoli and Spinelli. But, when they came to the shores of Naples, they could not land in the harbour because all the castles on that side of the city were occupied by the Hungarians, so that they had to go on to where the mouth of the classic river, Sebeto, was crossed by a bridge, the Ponte Guiscardo; thence they were escorted by the nobles and townspeople to the Palazzo Adjutorio by the Porta Capuana, where they proceeded to establish themselves and their Court.

For many months the fortunes of war inclined first to one side and then to the other. It began by Nicholas Acciajuoli's blockading the Hungarians in their strongholds, whilst Louis of Taranto employed his energies in reducing various of the rebellious barons to allegiance. Little by little, he extended his operations from the city

END OF JOAN'S CAREER

of Naples into the furthest confines of the kingdom; until, by dint of perseverance, he had contrived to make himself, as it appeared, master of it. But suddenly his good-fortune deserted him, owing to his abandonment by one of the King of Hungary's mercenaries whom Louis had seduced to the side of the Queen by heavy bribes. This was that Werner who styled himself "the enemy of God," and who now resold himself to the Hungarian, to whose Vicar-General, Conrad Wolf (Conrado Lupo, as the chronicler makes it), he opened the gates of Benevento.

The consequence of Werner's treachery was to force Louis of Taranto to fall back upon Naples; when the King of Hungary, on learning of it, made all speed to rejoin his troops—he had fled from Italy for a while to escape an epidemic of the plague—before Aversa, bringing with him heavy reinforcements. Landing at Manfredonia, he advanced, practically unopposed, so swiftly as to take his adversary completely by surprise. Having made himself master of the fortresses of Trani, Canosa, and Salerno in rapid succession, thus hemming in Louis of Taranto on the east and on the south, he proceeded to lay siege to Aversa on the north of Naples. This new move threatened disaster to Joan and her husband, who, being forced to remain on the defensive in Naples, were obliged to witness the spectacle of as gallant a resistance as was ever made by any beleaguered garrison; and that without being able to come in any way to the assistance of Pignatelli, the commandant of the place, and his heroic soldiers, who only numbered about five hundred men, as against some seventeen thousand of the enemy's forces. During three months Pignatelli flung back the King of Hungary's attacks upon

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

the town; until finally, despairing of taking Aversa by assault, the Hungarian resolved to reduce it by starvation.

Gradually the circumstances of the little garrison became hopeless; so that Pignatelli was confronted with the alternative of surrender or of death either by starvation or in a last grapple with the besiegers. To add to the general distress, a fleet of vessels bringing reinforcements to Queen Joan from Provence under the leadership of Renaud des Baux — some relation this, I fancy, of that terrible Chief Justice, the Count of Monte Scaglioso — and upon the timely arrival of which all depended, was delayed by contrary winds so that none could say where it was or whether it would ever arrive at all.

Under these circumstances, Louis of Taranto, abhorring the thought of allowing the brave Pignatelli and his soldiers to sacrifice themselves to no purpose (seeing that the ultimate surrender of Aversa was inevitable), sent a message to the King of Hungary inviting him to a personal encounter, in the same spirit in which the Emperor Paul Petrovitch sent a similar challenge to King George III of England. Louis of Taranto's proposal to the Hungarian was simplicity itself: that he of them who should kill the other should be King of Naples and of Jerusalem. To this the King of Hungary consented, with the advice of his counsellors, stipulating only that the combat should take place in the presence of the Emperor of Germany, as Cæsar and sovereign lord of all the princes of the West; or of the King of England, as a friend of both parties; or of the Patriarch of Aquileia, whose pretensions to equality with the Pope the Hungarian appears to have been by way of encourag-

END OF JOAN'S CAREER

ing in revenge for Clement VI's decision in favour of Joan.

These proposals, however, came to naught, for in the meanwhile Aversa surrendered to the Hungarians; so that there was no longer any call for him to risk his life for nothing. He had only to close in upon Naples, and the doomed city must at once fall into his hands; it was not more than twelve miles from Aversa to the capital and the Hungarian advance guard under Lupi was soon visible to the Neapolitans at the Porta Capuana; for it was easier for them, being mounted troops, to approach the city from the direction of Poggia than from that of Capodimonte, the more direct but more hilly road to Aversa.

Providentially, it was at this moment that the ships of Renaud des Baux hove in sight of Naples and speedily came to anchor in the port. Now it chanced that Maria of Durazzo with her two children had taken refuge from a possible sack of the city by the Hungarians in the Castel dell' Uovo, that, as the reader will remember, stands upon a rock surrounded on three sides by the sea and connected with the mainland by a causeway on arches. Both John and Louis, being occupied in the town itself at the time of the fleet's arrival, and supposing that Maria had already preceded them on board the flagship, remained at their posts until the last, encouraging their people and exhorting them to hold firm against the foe. But the Neapolitans, preferring surrender to possible annihilation, sent out a deputation to the King of Hungary to beg for terms; to the great anger and sorrow of their rightful sovereigns, who only now, when all seemed over, reluctantly sought the shelter of Des Baux's vessels, off the Castello dell' Uovo. Here, being

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

now much pressed for time, they embarked on the nearest of the ships and, still in the belief that the Duchess of Durazzo was safe on board that of the Admiral, they gave the signal to depart and sailed out of the harbour followed, as they imagined, by the rest of the fleet; for it was now drawing on to night, and too dark for them to see clearly what was taking place in rear of them.

Not until they reached Gaeta, towards noon of the following day, after fighting their way through a dreadful storm, did they realise that the Admiral's ship with the Queen's sister on board was not with the rest of the squadron that now came toiling, ship by ship, at long intervals into the harbour. What had happened to it? Had it sunk or been flung ashore by the waves during the night at some lonely spot upon that inhospitable coast? This was the agonising question that Joan asked of herself and of Louis and of all about them. And none could answer her.

Suddenly, as all hope of her ever again holding her sister in her arms seemed to be on the point of vanishing from before Joan's eyes, a cry of joy broke from her where she was leaning upon the gunwale of the vessel, her gaze fixed upon the sea and the cloud-scuds to southward. Hastening to her side, Louis saw that a ship in difficulties, a considerable distance from them, was being driven, in spite of persistent "tacking," towards them in the harbour of Gaeta. Thinking it must be the Admiral, Louis hoisted signals to him, that he should join them; but, to his amazement, no attention was at first paid to his signals; by which I mean to say that Louis had flown the Royal Standard and that the other only continued the more desperately to endeavour to keep out to sea.

END OF JOAN'S CAREER

Of a sudden, though, the newcomer's sails were seen to collapse and fall to the deck; and, judging from the way in which she was tossed and rolled about by the waves, albeit without changing her position, the watchers could see that she had cast anchor. Without further delay, Louis, in order to put an end to Joan's suspense, ordered a boat to be lowered and, together with several of his comrades-in-arms, sprang into it and was rowed out — not without considerable difficulty — to the vessel in the offing.

On drawing alongside, their feelings may more easily be imagined than described at hearing the cries of a woman in distress come to them from out the creaking, storm-tossed galley which was unquestionably that of Des Baux. Moreover, the deck was crowded with sailors, who now called to them to come quickly. Clambering over the side by means of a rope-ladder thrown down by the crew, Louis of Taranto and his comrades rushed towards the Admiral's quarters at the poop end of the deck, to find, his cabin shut and barred, the while the voice of Maria of Durazzo called to them from within, with redoubled energy, to come to her assistance. In an instant they had broken down the door and, surging into the roomy cabin, found themselves in the presence of Maria and of the Admiral, who was endeavouring to stifle her cries and to push her, with the help of his son, Robert des Baux, into a cupboard of the apartment.

Without a moment's hesitation, Louis of Taranto smote the Admiral with his sword, so that he fell dead, whilst Maria sank on to a couch, her face in her hands to shut out the sight of the killing. But, having slain the Admiral, Louis was content and ordered Robert des Baux to be merely put in irons and taken with them

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

back to the other vessel, where Queen Joan was waiting so feverishly to learn if her sister were alive and on board or not. And when Maria at last rejoined the Queen she told her how, having once taken her away from the Castel dell' Uovo on his flagship, the Admiral, instead of sailing in the wake of the rest of the fleet, had shaped his course for Marseilles; how he had tried to compel her to marry his son, and how at length the sailors, learning of it, and angered at his attempt to make the coast of France instead of following the Queen, had broken into mutiny on coming within sight of the ships at Gaeta.

It would seem that the younger Des Baux was less to blame in the affair than his father. At any rate, there is no evidence to show that he shared the latter's fate; although this may well have been owing to the fact that, soon after Louis of Taranto's return with her sister to the Queen, news was brought to them from Naples of a sudden change in the situation there. It appeared that, soon after the departure of the Queen and her husband from the city, the answer of the King of Hungary to the deputies sent out to surrender the city to him was received and made known to the inhabitants. But of such a nature was it, so atrociously haughty and so sinister withal, that, rather than submit themselves to so despotic and so resentful a Prince, the unhappy Neapolitans declared their intention of dying with arms in their hands in the defence of their families and their homes. No sooner did the Hungarians learn of this resolve than a desperate attack was delivered by them upon the Porta

END OF JOAN'S CAREER

Capuana, which they succeeded in penetrating, and compelled the defenders to fall back towards the harbour and the fortresses in the southern quarter of the city.

As the Hungarians were, however, advancing through the black, deserted streets upon the Castel Nuovo in the hope of capturing at least a portion of the royal family, the amazing rashness of their venturing thus under cover of night into the midst of an hostile, well-armed, and well-barricaded populace suddenly became patent to the Neapolitans; as well as the extreme exhaustion of the Hungarian men and horses. No sooner had the Neapolitans recognised their opportunity than they seized it, flinging themselves upon their enemies, whom they now beat back to the Porta Capuana and out through it into the country beyond, amidst great slaughter and an indescribable confusion, taking no prisoners but killing all who fell into their hands.

This was practically the end of that war of the Hungarians against Queen Joan and Louis of Taranto, after whom messengers were despatched that night to Gaeta, asking them to return and to lead their subjects once more against the foreigners, who, said the message, had been beaten back from Naples and were in full retreat upon their former eastern base about Benevento. Soon after the return to Naples of Joan and Louis, however, a truce for twelve months was arranged between them and the Hungarian, who was now more willing to listen to reason than he had been before; so that when the Pope was invited by Joan to mediate between them, he welcomed the suggestion thankfully enough. Pope Clement's first proposal, though, that Joan should make the King of Hungary the heir to her crown, and so put her sister Maria out of the succession, Joan refused even to con-

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

template; and then the Pope suggested that she should pay a lump sum in cash to the King of Hungary as ransom for all the fortresses that he still held in his hands in the Kingdom of Naples; in return for which he was to abandon all further claims upon and to the Crown.

To this Joan agreed willingly; but, when the proposal was made known to the King of Hungary, he said: "It is not for money or lands that I have fought, but for vengeance on my brother's murderers. But now my work is done; the angry shades are satisfied, and I am going back to my own country." Nor would he accept so much as a single piece of money for all the strong places and the power that were still his in the Kingdom of Naples; but gave all over, undefiled by money, to Joan, and then departed as he had come, triumphant and unapproachable.

After Louis of Hungary had gone away, there came a legate from the Pope to crown Louis of Taranto as King of Naples and to solemnly ratify once more his marriage with the Queen. All of which was carried out on May 25, 1351, and the next three days, with an accompaniment of much feasting and tourneys; also a general amnesty was issued to all who had in any way taken part against their lawful sovereigns in the late wars. The ecclesiastical ceremonies took place in the Chapel of Justice built by Charles II, to which Joan afterwards added the Church called "Chiesa dell' Incoronata," in memory of her wedding to Louis of Taranto. Among the frescoes in the Church are portraits of Joan and of Louis and of the infant son of the Duke of Calabria, all painted by Roberto di Oderisio or, as some say, by his master, the great Giotto himself. It is recorded that the festivities passed off to the satisfaction of all and were only marred by a single untoward event. For it

END OF JOAN'S CAREER

happened that, as King Louis was riding back from his coronation beside the Queen, and was passing through the Porta Petruccia towards the Castel Nuovo, a party of ladies threw down upon him an immense quantity of flowers, making his horse rear up and break the rein. To save himself, lest it should fall and crush him, the King sprang out of the saddle; but in doing so he loosened the crown so that it fell from his head into the roadway and was broken into three pieces. And that same day there fell sick and died his infant daughter by Joan. However, the King forbade that the festivities should be spoiled by mourning; and so they were carried to their conclusion. And in memory of his coronation King Louis instituted the Order of the Knot.

The short rest of his life, though, was full of wars and disquiet and disillusionment, for he was constantly employed in repressing rebellion and in checking the independent tendencies of his barons. Among the most formidable of the disturbers of his peace was Louis of Durazzo, brother of that evil Charles who had perished by order of the King of Hungary at Aversa. Louis of Durazzo was defeated, however, and ended his days in the Castello dell' Uovo. But he left behind him a son, Charles, whose life was spared in answer to the pleading of Joan, who took charge of him and loaded him with kindnesses and married him to her niece, Margaret, the daughter of Maria of Durazzo and of that other Charles.

Worn out by incessant campaigning, King Louis fell victim to a malarial fever on June 5, 1362, in the forty-third year of his age.

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

Soon afterwards Joan married James of Aragon, King of Minorca, who had first fallen in love with her at Avignon, where the history of his fortunes and adventures, combined with the melancholy handsomeness of him, had made a deep impression both upon Joan and upon her sister. For James of Aragon had spent no less than thirteen years of his life as a prisoner in an iron cage, and was even said to have been reduced to the necessity of begging his bread. No sooner was he married to Joan than he devoted himself to making war upon Pedro the Cruel, the usurper of his throne, and died near Navarre, in 1375.

After King James' demise, Joan married again, as her fourth husband, Duke Otho of Brunswick; by now, having no children alive of her own, she adopted as her successor Charles of Durazzo, her nephew by marriage, whose life she had saved.

During the next few years Joan, as the result of a quarrel with Pope Urban VI (who as Bartolomeo Prignani had been formerly one of her own subjects), gave her support to the anti-Pope, Clement VII, whom she sheltered in the Castello dell' Uovo. For this she was promptly excommunicated, being at the same time declared deposed from the throne, whilst her subjects were formally relieved of their allegiance to her. The Crown of Naples was bestowed by the Holy Father upon Charles of Durazzo, whom Joan had already proclaimed her successor and who now showed his gratitude in the following remarkable manner: Hastily borrowing an army from his great uncle, old King Louis of Hungary, who was still alive, Charles set out for Naples, where his wife and their two children were even then living as honoured guests and relatives under Joan's roof. So soon

END OF JOAN'S CAREER

as she learned of this, Joan sent word to Louis of Anjou, brother of the King of France, to say that she appointed him her successor instead of Charles and begging him to come to her aid against the latter.

On the approach of Charles' army, Joan sent out his wife and children to plead with him that he would treat her generously; but, instead of doing so, Charles laid siege to Joan in the Castel Nuovo; her husband, Duke Otho, he had blockaded behind him in the castle of Aversa. At length, though, the German fought his way through the containing force before Aversa and fell upon Charles of Durazzo's flank and rear guard by way of Piedigrotta. Long the unequal combat raged, but at last when Otho himself, after being wounded and having broken his sword, and, thanks to his leading his men and becoming separated from them in the midst of the enemy, had been taken prisoner, the little remnant of his followers, surrounded and hopelessly outnumbered, had no choice but to surrender. Whereupon, Charles of Durazzo redoubled his efforts against the Castel Nuovo and, shortly afterwards, succeeded in taking it; after which he wrote to the King of Hungary to say that the Queen of Naples was his prisoner and asking that monarch's good pleasure in regard to her.

Some months now passed, during which Otho of Brunswick, on promising to quit Neapolitan territory for ever, was given his liberty; and the French army of Louis of Anjou compelled to abandon its march upon Naples. At the end of that time an answer was received from the King of Hungary, commanding that Joan should be put to death as a last propitiatory sacrifice to his murdered brother.

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

Since the taking of Naples the Queen had been sent for safekeeping to the castle of Muro in Calabria.

On the 5th of May, 1385, as she was praying in her room there, that looked out over the ravine and the town below, the door was opened very stealthily, so that the Queen thought it was one of her maids and did not turn her head to look at the intruder. Nor did she ever, in all probability, see who it was that had entered; for, in the same moment, a cord was slipped over her head and swiftly drawn tight about her throat as only a man of strong hands could draw it; so that she died instantly, her unfinished prayer upon her lips. And the four Hungarian soldiers, who had seen her die, left her lying there and went away quietly to report to their commanding officer that the thing was done as it had been ordered. And the cord with which they had done it was the same with which Andrew of Hungary had been strangled at Aversa; so, at least, it is said.

CHAPTER XV

NAPLES UNDER MURAT

Beauty of Naples—Figures of Its History—St. Januarius—Murat, King of Naples—Achievements as King—The Carbonari—England's Promises—Napoleonic Diplomacy—Rise of the Bourbons—Alliance with Austria—Murat's Indecision—Distrust of the Allies—Murat's Statesmanship—Talleyrand's Diplomacy—Naples, the Gay—Conspiracy in the Palace—The Escape from Elba—Ideal Government—War Against Murat—Advance of the Austrians—Murat Driven to Naples—Interview with His Wife—Last Instructions to His Ministers—Escape.

THE fairest and, in some respects, the wickedest spot on the face of the earth is that wonder city, that broods by the “tideless, dolorous, midland sea,” Vesuvius, smoking like some monstrous chimney of hell behind her, the deep blue, translucent glory of the sea like a drift of Our Blessed Lady's mantle before.

Travelling round that bay and on around the point towards Calabria, hardly a dreamy mile goes by that some of the history of thousands of years ago does not present itself.

It has been the home of saints and of scholars; of soldiers a few, of statesmen a-many, of some of the most beautiful characters that ever walked the earth, and of some of the very worst that ever polluted the world with their presence. At the top of the list stands St. Januarius, Bishop of Benevento, who with six of his companions came to Naples during the ninth persecution to comfort and strengthen the Faithful, and who being seized with his companions was taken to Pozzuoli, and there flung to the wild beasts; who, when they refused to harm him,

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

was plunged into a blazing furnace, out of which he came intact, and was thereafter beheaded; but who stands at the bottom, I should be afraid to say. At this point there is an “embarras de richesses!”

Of all the landmarks of history with which the Kingdom of Naples is dotted none, perhaps, is more rich in Romance or more imbued with the spirit of Tragedy than a certain straggling, half-ruined castle near the little village of Pizzo, upon the coast of Calabria.

A round tower, grey and sullen with age, faces the sea; in the wall of it is set a small, heavily barred window, through which one of the very few comparatively good Kings of Naples looked his last upon a world which had seen him rise from a peasant to a monarch.

There is neither space nor need to recapitulate here the life of Murat. Italy, Russia, Germany, Austria, Egypt had felt the tread of his all-shattering squadrons, whose onset no horse or foot of continental Europe had ever been able to withstand. The Dictator of Europe had given him his sister for a wife. Naples had been proud to own him for her King. Glory, wealth, splendour had been his, and he could have kept them — I think it is safe to say that he could have kept them — had he been able to stand firm. But he had not the strength, even when he joined the Coalition in 1814. While he was still fighting Eugène, he could not resist the temptation to intrigue with the Viceroy, who of course instantly saw to it that the Allies were notified of the fact. In those stormy days nobody trusted his neighbour, nor did any one blame his neighbour particularly for trying to keep his political balance in any way that he could; so

NAPLES UNDER MURAT

that Murat's — inconsistency, let us call it — was not held against him afterwards. The Bourbons were not popular, either, and Ferdinand, that perfect product of the hapless, helpless race, was generally detested. It must be said for the Bourbons that their sins are, as a rule, of the negative sort, and cruelty is not one of them. Ferdinand, however, besides being a spineless king, was a brute and a coward, which again are not Bourbon traits.

Joachim Murat's position was always a difficult one, to be sure. Although King of Naples, he was in Napoleon's time only a king at his imperial brother-in-law's pleasure, and regarded by the latter as little more than a pro-consul, elevated to a throne in order to carry out his master's wishes. At the same time he was conscientious enough to attempt the task of being a real king — and a good one. He loved the "flair" of kingship, but he did recognise some of his responsibilities towards his subjects and continued, while Napoleon's back was turned, to govern fairly well. The Neapolitans loved show and noise and ceremony, and they liked the handsome, dashing, open-handed cavalryman. The country was rich, too. In those days, even if the peasants lived like cattle, at least they had plenty to eat and drink, and even now those times are spoken of as a bankrupt speaks of the fat years behind him.

"*Era una schiuma d'oro*" (It was a froth of gold), said one old man to me, some years ago, "before this government of robbers took possession of it!"

Of all Napoleon's kinglings, Bernadotte alone contrived to keep his crown, and that may very well have been because Napoleon did not choose him, but only acceded to the popular demand when he let him reign.

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

Murat came to the throne of the Two Sicilies in 1808, when poor unlucky Joseph was compelled, much against his will, to go to Spain. Joachim was not always popular; indeed, that would have been impossible, in the condition of things which prevailed in 1810 and 1811. He could not always be on the spot, and in his absence he had to trust to his government. This being made up of Neapolitans — both Liberal and otherwise — and of the Frenchmen who had come in with him, did not trust itself, and the King's authority came to be decentralised beyond all control from the throne. His life was conspired against several times. Once in particular a plot was hatched to assassinate him while he was hunting in the woods of Mondragone, but one of the conspirators turned king's evidence and the plotters were caught. When they were brought to trial, and their guilt was proved, their advocate was making the best he could of a bad job, when the presiding judge stopped the proceedings to read aloud a paper which he had just received from the King.

“I had hoped,” it said, “that those accused of conspiring against my person might have been proved innocent; but I have heard with regret that the Solicitor-General has demanded a heavy punishment against them all. Their guilt may perhaps be real, but I am desirous of still preserving a ray of hope that they may be innocent, and I hasten to stop the decision of the Tribunal and to pardon the accused. I order that upon receipt of this paper the trial be closed and the unhappy men set at liberty. As the trial concerns a foolish attempt upon my life, and the sentence is not yet pronounced, I do not offend against the law of the State, if without

NAPLES UNDER MURAT

having received a recommendation to mercy I thus use the highest and best prerogative of the Crown."

Murat set many public works on foot, notably during 1812. Roads and bridges and theatres were built, marshes drained and aqueducts constructed, the most noteworthy of which achievements were the Strada di Posillipo, the Campo di Marte, the observatory on the height of Miradone, and a lunatic asylum. This latter caused a good deal of surprise as well, for lunatics were not generally coddled in that fashion in the Naples of 1812.

In the middle of all this activity, Murat was recalled to Paris, and it was only after many months and many experiences that he set eyes upon his kingdom again. Had his advice, which was to halt the 1812 campaign at Smolensk and establish a settled government in Poland, been followed, it is possible and more than possible that the disastrous affair would have had a different termination, for Napoleon could have kept his communications open; but the Emperor, at that time, suspected Murat and Ney and Rapp, believing that a weariness of war and a desire to reap some of the fruits of their labour was at the bottom of the really excellent counsel that they offered him. And so he pushed on to Moscow, partly from impatience, partly to satisfy the gnawing appetite of the "folie de grandeurs" which had hold of him, partly because he did not trust his own men. "Ours is not an army of position," he said. "It is an army of attack — not of defence."

Murat's conduct during the campaign was such as to extract an unwilling praise even from the Emperor, who was no believer in praise as an agent for anything but the rank and file. Only when Murat left the wreck

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

of the army, the command of which Napoleon had entrusted to him, on the Oder, did the quarrel which the war had drugged into a false quiet break out again.

Napoleon, on hearing of Joachim's return to his kingdom, wrote a frightful letter to Caroline, and this falling into her husband's hands drew from him a reply which threatened to break up the relations between the two for all time, and it was only Caroline's self-control and tact that healed the breach for the time being.

A common danger and the ties of their old comradeship drew them together again when Murat arrived in Bohemia, and then he fought stoutly and well. It is hardly credible and, were it not history, it would be absolutely inconceivable, that, while battling whole-heartedly for the French in Bohemia, Murat was engaged, through his government, in an attempt to unify Italy by the assistance of Great Britain, which was to supply twenty-five thousand men, who, with his own troops and the disaffected Italians in the ranks of the French garrisons, were to drive the Tricolour over the Alps. He contrived to persuade himself that he was honest in his intentions, too, by a process of reasoning peculiar to several of the Emperor's lieutenants in those times. As Frenchmen they marched with the armies of France, and served her to the best of their splendid ability; as kings and grand dukes, they served their subjects, or thought they did, with equal enthusiasm. Bentinck, however, being an Englishman, failed to understand the presence of their separate political entities in one person, and withdrew, so that the unification of Italy, fortunately, one cannot but think, fell through, and Joachim returned to Naples in 1813.

It was then that the society, known as the Carbonari,

NAPLES UNDER MURAT

who had appeared in the kingdom three years before, began to spread themselves in all classes of society, conspiring in the sweet Italian fashion, which conspires for the sake of the pure delight of intriguing. They had no definite aim. Their professed "raison d'être" was a vague dream of a vague constitution, "à l'Anglaise." In such hands, of course, this would have been about as fruitful of any real liberty as the Commune, and none knew this better than Lord William Bentinck; but any stone will do to throw at the Devil, and Lord William hastened to communicate with the liberty-loving thieves, murderers, and brigands who represented the society of Naples. There were, to be sure, some honest men among them, whose hearts were stronger than their heads. There always are a few in these affairs, enticed in by flattery and utterly uninformed as to the real object of their associates, who are pushed to the front for the public to see.

Among these was a certain young gentleman, a man of fortune and courage — a captain of militia in his own town, which stood upon the summit of a high and precipitous mountain. His name was Capobianco (white-head) and, at the time when he came to the notice of the authorities, they had discovered the trafficking of the society with Lord William, who had been sending across volumes containing the new Sicilian laws which had been enacted in that island, under the Bourbons, or, to speak more accurately, had been forced upon the Bourbons by Lord William, under pain of being left to look after themselves and being compelled to fight for their own possessions. The conspirators must have been a simple-minded people, if they really believed that Ferdinand had promulgated anything of the kind without compulsion.

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

Lord William promised the Neapolitans a similar code, if they would only restore Ferdinand — Lord William was always rather free with his promises—and the Government of Naples, finding the horrid thing in their midst, proscribed the society and threatened with most dreadful punishments any one who mentioned the word constitution. Whereupon the Carbonari dropped down into Calabria and proceeded to shout it aloud, among them young Capobianco.

As it has been said, his town was practically inaccessible, so that, despairing of his capture, General Janelli made a pretence of refusing to believe in his association with the Carbonari; after several ineffectual efforts to entrap him (for Capobianco had a native mistrust of authority under any guise save that of the Church), he one day invited him to dinner upon the occasion of a public festival in Cosenza. Capobianco hesitated, but finally made up his mind to attend, feeling that he would be safe if he took unfrequented byways and surrounded himself with a dependable escort.

He would feel safe, he told himself, in Cosenza, for he intended to arrive when the banquet should be already begun and leave before it was over, and, in the house of the General, he would be in the company of all of the authorities of the province, whose presence he seems to have conceived to be a safeguard, for some reason or another.

So he went and was royally entertained. Healths were drunk, compliments were exchanged, and Capobianco proposed to depart, followed by the salutations of the General. He got no further than the ante-room, though, where the gendarmes were waiting for him. They seized him and dragged him off to prison, where the next

NAPLES UNDER MURAT

morning he was tried by a military commission, condemned, and publicly beheaded before mid-day in the Square.

When this was bruited abroad, some of the "patriots" fled to Sicily and the Bourbons, to breathe, as we are told, "the free atmosphere of Sicily under the Bourbons!" and Joachim's unpopularity began to assume the proportions of a menace.

Still, however, the better elements were upon his side, perhaps from expediency,—for Murat's servants would receive short shrift at Ferdinand's hands should that monarch return,—but they gave Joachim some very good advice among them, even if some of it is rather too subtle. Napoleon's hands were too full to allow of his interference, and he, in his dealings with the Allies, invariably quoted fifty thousand Neapolitan troops as part of his own force. The Allies knew better, though. Two fatal defects in a ruler are over-craftiness and inconsistency. Murat had both. At one time, as it has been seen, he hastened to pardon those who had conspired against his life; a year later he allowed his own resentment against the Carbonari to lead him into an attempt to crush them by a severity which merely drove them in on each other and made a solid body out of a straggling mob. Before this, with an ideal the meaning of which very few of them understood, the Carbonari—the leaders of the movement, that is to say—were fighting the clouds; but the harrying they received gave them a definite grievance and one that was shared, for purely personal reasons, by thousands who would otherwise never have joined the movement at all.

The craftiness which Murat conceived to be policy delivered him into the hands of men far cleverer than

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

himself, whose life's business it was to overreach "one another.

He was a brave man and a most excellent soldier, but those were not qualities that could help him in the thimble-rigging, knife-in-the-boot game of Napoleonic statecraft, played by men who had not an illusion remaining about each other, and who, with the possible exception of the Russians, had each and all betrayed their neighbours over and over again.

Murat, at Ollendorf upon the shores of Ulm, received several very polite and pressing invitations to an alliance from the Austrian Commissioner, Count von Mier, and he had listened to them, as one of his contemporaries says, without disdain. Wishing, though, to get an idea of what his own people might think of such a suggestion, he consulted two or three of his ministers and generals on the subject. The result did not help him much, for they all held different opinions. One held that France's welfare was that of Naples, and that with the return of the Bourbons to Paris everything that the Revolution and the Empire had done for Italy would be wiped out; another, that Murat's duty was to establish himself firmly and hold fast to his throne, whatever might happen to his own people and the Emperor. Upon one point they were all agreed and that was that Murat's first and most imperative duty was to so order his relations with the Powers as to exclude any possible chance of Ferdinand's return; it was as to the best way of attaining that desired condition of things that they differed.

"The old and the new era," said one, advocating the continuance of the existing alliance with France, "are at war with one another, and the victory cannot for the present be assigned to any particular state or people.

NAPLES UNDER MURAT

Should the new triumph, all the social institutions of Europe will, in twenty years' time, be established upon the basis of the Civil polity introduced by the French; but, if the old, all progress will be arrested and the new States be thrown back towards the hated condition of the past."

He goes on to remark upon the reliance to be placed upon the word of the Kings then struggling against Napoleon, "for, if kings promise to-day, they will break their words to-morrow."

The other finishes his address, in which he advises Murat to let France bleed to death by herself, thus:

"Above all, I beseech you not to be caught by false glory, but to believe that there is only one way to preserve your reputation, which is to preserve your Throne!" The military element seems to have been of the same opinion as number two, but Joachim wavered — as well he might, for both parties to the discussion were right. Even if he joined himself to the Allies, it was quite likely that his throne would be taken from him at the first convenient moment. The Bourbons were everywhere, and Spain, Italy, Austria, and presently France, would be filled with them. Their clamour would rise in a hurricane, and what could those who professed to hold their own crowns as gifts from the Almighty say in answer to them? If the Emperor of Austria ruled by Divine Right, he must believe that Ferdinand did the same. If the Divine Right could be disregarded in one case, it could be disregarded in all, and there were plenty of evilly disposed persons who desired nothing better. It would be a weapon in their hands, and they had plenty of weapons already.

In spite of this, and in the face of it, Francis of Aus-

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

tria, by a treaty concluded on the 11th of January, 1814, acknowledged Joachim's dominion and sovereignty over the States he ruled, and Joachim, as a matter of form, returned the compliment.

Thus Naples was definitely placed in the ranks of France's enemies, Austria agreeing to furnish thirty thousand men for Italy and Naples thirty thousand, the allied forces to be under the command of the King of Naples, or, in his absence, of the officer highest in rank in the Austrian army.

This, together with a promise that Francis would use his good offices to bring about a reconciliation between Naples and England, as well as with Austria's allies, was the published treaty, but there were several secret clauses, some of which seem to indicate a lack of humour in the high contracting parties.

Francis, having acknowledged Joachim's sovereignty, pledged himself to obtain the renunciation of it from Ferdinand (as though the consent of that individual made any difference to anybody!), while Joachim promised, on his part, to indemnify Ferdinand, thereby acknowledging that his own claim was that of *force majeure* and nothing else; and yet the principle of Ferdinand's Divine Right was never called into question! But at the same time Murat was in correspondence with General Miollis, commanding the French troops in Rome, and with Barbou and Fouché, assuring them of his devotion and attachment to France, and endeavouring to explain away his treaty with Francis on the ground of political necessity!

Miollis withdrew into Sant' Angelo, and the Neapolitan troops forced the little body of French under Lascolette to shut themselves up in the citadel of Civita Vecchia." But now, after having inaugurated his

NAPLES UNDER MURAT

campaign, Murat's indecision prevented him from giving any definite orders, and his generals instantly began to suspect him of playing them false.

Proceeding into the States of Rome, he found anarchy prevailing in every direction, and, already torn with conflicting emotions, he found himself the target of generals, magistrates, and Austrian ministers, who maintained that he had not acted up to his part of the treaty.

That roused him, and he woke up from his lethargy long enough to start the Neapolitan troops forward and to settle the civil administration a little. A good many Frenchmen still remained in the Neapolitan army and, in order to retain them, and have some company in his matricidal course, he assured them that the treaty was a feint and that he was working heart and soul for his beloved country. But he so entangled himself with lies that he presently found it difficult to move in any direction without finding the net of them about his feet. The Neapolitans disliked and distrusted the French, because they saw in them a drag upon Joachim's wheel. The French despised the Neapolitans and presently departed, seeing clearly whither they were being led. Since the only officers of any value in the Neapolitan army were these Frenchmen, Murat was now compelled to rely upon the Germans — that is to say, the very men he had fought against in the preceding year.

The French were not in sufficient numbers to offer any real resistance and it was not long before Civita Vecchia, Sant' Angelo, Florence, Leghorn, Ferrara, and Ancona were in Murat's hands.

Bentinck presently landed at Leghorn with fourteen thousand Anglo-Sicilians, and Eugène, the Viceroy, found himself with fifty thousand men opposed to forty-five

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

thousand Austrians, twenty thousand Neapolitans, eight thousand Germans under Murat and Bentinck's Anglo-Sicilians.

Of course Murat mistrusted his allies, and the allies returned the compliment with interest. He had no very high opinion of them as soldiers, either, in which he was justified. Bellegarde carried his suspicion so far as to refuse to build a bridge or two over the Po, lest Murat might use them against him, and Murat became convinced that Bellegarde and Bentinck wanted to make him attack the Viceroy in order to injure his troops and his reputation, for what were thirty thousand Neapolitans in the scale against fifty thousand Frenchmen commanded by good officers and in the hands of such generals as Eugène had on his staff? He discovered, too, that Bentinck, who had landed as his ally, was permitting his Sicilians to distribute pamphlet copies of an edict of Ferdinand's, reminding the Neapolitans of his rights and exciting them to rise against Joachim. Bentinck was not a very clever man, and here he showed himself to be a fool. He had already given the Duke of Wellington a good deal of trouble by ruining the Duke's market for specie in Spain, offering a higher price for it than the Duke could afford to give, and by various other ill-judged and ill-timed schemes; now, having Joachim on his side — the one man among them all who could lead an army — he deliberately attempted to ruin his influence in the moment of action, by turning his own men against him, and by siding with Bellegarde in every question of military policy, wherein neither of them were really worthy to be allowed to carry out his, Joachim's, orders.

From the Austrian monarch, Murat might have expected that sort of thing, for Austria had at one time

NAPLES UNDER MURAT

and another during the last twenty years broken her word to about everybody with whom she had had any dealings. Metternich boasted of it openly, and, had Murat been gifted with a little more political foresight, he might have felt even then the hands that were pulling him down.

It may be said that he hoped for Napoleon's triumph in the latter's Homeric fight, nor could he be blamed where all the circumstances are considered. "In every transaction," says one of his staff, "whether emanating from the rulers of kingdoms or the commanders of the armies that were sitting about in Italy, some perfidy transpired or lay concealed."

The only people who were really happy at this time were the Neapolitans, who, with the English markets opened, began to prosper after the long, lean years, and held their heads high now that their King and their armies had been, as they thought, distinguishing themselves. Poor Joachim now received a petition from his generals, published with the approval of the whole army, begging him to summon a council of war and hear their "opinions"! It is a wonder that the veteran of a hundred pitched battles did not hang somebody for the impertinence, for from any point of view it is difficult to understand what they expected of him in the way of action. But he let the incident pass.

Now the Pope, who had been released by Napoleon, approached the Papal Dominions and reached Tara before Joachim, who was in Bologna, was aware of the fact. Joachim, who had a good part of the Papal States in his possession and hoped for more — since Francis of Austria had promised him his assistance in the matter, — sought by every means to avert the Holy Father's onward progress from Reggio; but he had a stronger man

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

than himself to deal with, and one who had at his back the enthusiasm of a people. Murat's own officers helped to draw the Papal carriage in one place, and his men broke their ranks, falling over one another for the privilege of being allowed to approach the returning exile.

In spite of all that Joachim's envoy, General Carrascosa, could do, Pius' determination to proceed was unaffected, and the general returned to his master, begging him for his own sake to give way before the popular enthusiasm, which every day was increasing. Murat, however, decided upon a middle course. He would render to the Pope all the honour in his power, but he would give him no assistance.

At Bologna, the Pope called upon Murat, and, though alone and helpless in the face of his opponent's armed strength, extracted from him the return of the Patrimony of Peter to the Church. Pius did not relinquish his claim to the rest of the Papal Possessions, either, and continued on his way to Cesena, his native place, by the Strada Emilia, among his own subjects, although Murat, fearing the excited feeling among the latter, wished him to go through Tuscany.

Murat's power was toppling over, for, do what he might, his interests were the interests of the France that he was fighting. But what could he do? It would take a clever man to find his way safely out of such an impasse as confronted Joachim. Could he have remained neutral, it is possible that he might have survived the hurricane, but that was almost impossible, cut off as he was from France and encircled by the Allies. Besides, the quarrel with England had brought such misery to his subjects that this condition alone was reason enough for attempting the impossible. Napoleon was battling with

NAPLES UNDER MURAT

his back to the wall, and, even though he fought as man never fought before or since, the tide was engulfing him. His own ministers were carrying on secret correspondence with the enemy, and preparing their own salvation, careless either of their duty or of their country's humiliation.

When on the 15th of April, 1814, Murat received the news of the capitulation of Paris and the abdication of the Emperor, he paled as he read the despatch and betrayed great agitation and nervousness, and for several days afterwards he was gloomy and unapproachable.

He repaired quietly to Bologna, and, while Italy went mad and raved in its madness, while the Milanese murdered Prina and Eugène Beauharnais took refuge with the King of Bavaria, he returned to Naples, where he was received like a conqueror and was compelled to bow his appreciation and render his thanks for a display, not one word or one smile of which, as he well knew, was genuine. The people expected very naturally that a new order of things would bring them a new government, and Murat's own suspicions were confirmed when the treaty of peace was signed at Paris and the Congress of Vienna was summoned without any mention of him at all. Legitimacy was now the rage, and Joachim, though without an invitation, despatched the Duke di Campochiaro and Prince de Cariati as his representatives to Vienna. That done, he turned to his kingdom and, taking time by the forelock, he summoned the most able men of the country to him and set them to work upon the land, the finances, and the army, only warning them not to follow too hard after the latest fashion or to "run backwards blindfold."

At the same time, on his own account, he lightened the

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

heaviest of the taxes, brought in measures for the encouragement of trade with England, and permitted the free export of grain. Then he decreed that the offices of State were to be given only to Neapolitans, and that foreigners holding them who refused to be naturalised must resign, after which he sat down to wait upon events.

By these measures he contrived to win over a large part of the people, and, by degrees, the old Murat began to emerge from his hiding-place in the personality of the new. His Council had agreed with him in almost every question of importance, and the counsels which he received, while suggesting a constitution, were really sincere in their hopes for the maintenance of his dynasty. His army, which he had had time to put into shape again, was with him; the newspapers were obsequious in their praises of his virtues; and all the corporate bodies in the State announced their readiness to pledge their lives and property in his support.

The Congress of Vienna began to pay some attention to these signs of popular approval and it was noised abroad that the Emperor of Russia had let fall the remark that "it was impossible to restore the 'Butcher King' now that the interests of the people had to be considered." Then Caroline of Austria, Ferdinand's wife, died suddenly, and so little was her decease lamented that Francis forbade the Court to go into mourning for her.

It may well be imagined that Joachim began to feel safe on his throne, and the fact that, by an agreement concluded at Charmont some little time before the fall of Napoleon, Austria, Russia, Prussia, and England had confirmed the principles of the alliance between Austria and Murat, helped him to hope that, after all and in spite

NAPLES UNDER MURAT

of everything, he might be allowed to remain. He had not reckoned, though, with Talleyrand, whose desire it was, just then, to show himself as a reformed character who was ready to do anything to prove his detestation of the fiend whom he had been serving and of all the fiend's family, which of course included Joachim.

Talleyrand had besides a private grudge against Joachim, for the latter had openly mistrusted him for years, and Napoleon's parting remarks on the subject of his late Minister for Foreign Affairs must still have been tingling in that gentleman's ears when he set out for Vienna.

"I should have hung him long ago," said the Emperor. "I always knew that he would be the first to betray me when the occasion offered itself!"

Talleyrand, who had arrived at the Congress as an apologist both for France and himself, a man with no claims to consideration from anybody, outside the pale of Christian intercourse as an excommunicate bishop and an unfrocked priest, a creature at the sight of whom Francis and his Catholic princes must have shuddered; without a friend — or a cause — bankrupt of power and credit, contrived by the sheer force of his own genius to dominate the whole Congress after the first half-dozen sittings.

He set Austria and Russia by the ears, and heated up the quarrel until there was every prospect of war; lined up their adherents and pushed them into the conflict, and manœuvred so marvellously that, in a very short while, France and her friendship were the objects of the diplomacy of both contending parties. Metternich, Nesselrode, Hardenberg, Castlereagh, Stewart, and Stackelberg were little more than children in his hands. His confrères —

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

Noailles, Dupin, and Dalberg — had no voice in the questions that arose. Talleyrand was the Congress, and when he began to use his power to pay off some of his grudges and enmities, it was on Murat that his hand first fell. More Legitimist than the Legitimists, he set out to earn the million francs promised him by Ferdinand for the throne of Naples.

The first inkling that Murat received of the turn that affairs had taken was a request, couched in the terms of a command, from Francis, that he would restore the Marches to the Pope. Now the Marches in question had been promised to Murat by Francis himself, not twelve months before, and Murat in answer proceeded to increase his garrison and commenced to strengthen the fortifications of Ancona. He, besides, started a quarrel with the Pope, and despatched a minister of his called Magella into the Marches to assist the Carbonari in their plots against the dominion of the Holy Father.

It was about this time that he began to receive overtures, couched in the most affectionate and brotherly language, from Napoleon at Elba. A succession of disguised conspirators from Paris and other places passed in and out of the Palace, in Naples, generally under cover of the spring night, while the city disported itself along the waterfront, and gay ladies and gay men sat over their cards in the great, cool rooms or wandered about in the sleeping gardens.

For Naples was gay in those days. People saw light ahead after the years of gloom. Hunger had vanished; real hunger, at any rate. The King's public works gave employment. Uniforms glittered everywhere. To their minds, Naples was a Paris in miniature, so the lights shone and the world danced and played on, music lay over

NAPLES UNDER MURAT

the place in a rainbow web of sound, and the blue sea smiled at the stars.

But up in the Palace, behind closed doors, Murat sat with his chin in his hand, and his eyes wandering out to the sea from time to time, as though he expected to see something there — something whose name was never mentioned except between him and his wife, and then only in whispers.

By ones and twos the mysterious figures arrived, coming in through side doors, and staying a while, talking with their hands to their mouths, some volubly and eagerly, some gently and hesitatingly, but one thing could be observed of all of them, and that was that, somewhere on their persons, casually as a trifle but plain enough to eyes that looked for it, was either a small bunch of violets or a strip of violet coloured ribbon or a bit of violet coloured silk.

“Are you fond of the violet?” they would ask when they met. “It will return in the spring,” was the answer — and it was spring already down there. Spring breaks in February in Naples. The King was, outwardly, as gay as any, and only Caroline and a very few devoted friends saw the other side of him. The ambassadors of the Allies were watching him, as he knew, and, as was bound to happen, word came to them that strange visitors were being entertained at the Palace, among them Princess Pauline, Napoleon’s sister, who shortly afterwards returned to Elba.

Ferdinand, free of his rather dreadful Austrian consort, proceeded to espouse a certain Lucia Migliano, a lady, it is said, of noble birth but of a vulgar and immoral character — which is probably true, for how could

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

any clean and self-respecting woman have ever been induced to marry Ferdinand?

That monarch now swore to the constitution of 1812. He opened, dissolved, and reopened a Parliament, and generally walked in the popular path. Those happenings, naturally, reacted upon the Neapolitans and helped to undermine Joachim's position badly. The Carbonari broke out again, soon afterwards, and Joachim began to be afraid lest these popular spasms should come to the ears of the Congress and affect his interests; so he attempted to arrange matters with the Carbonari, which only went to their heads and made them more offensive than ever.

Things could not remain so for long, and there is no saying what might have happened had not Napoleon discovered that the allied Powers had not the slightest idea of living up to their word with him, that the promised annuity — promised on the basis of the huge private fortune which they had looted from him — was never going to be paid, and that some one whom he had small difficulty in connecting with the Bourbon Government in Paris was attempting to poison him.

On the evening of the 4th of March, 1815, Murat, with some of his family, was amusing himself as best he could, attempting to divert his mind from the problems and questions which had harassed him all day, in his wife's apartments, when there appeared in the doorway a bowing attendant, begging the King and Queen Caroline to give an audience to a messenger who was awaiting their pleasure in the next room. Murat assented carelessly and told the attendant to bring him in, but the former replied that the newcomer had particularly asked that the King and Queen would give them-

NAPLES UNDER MURAT

selves the trouble to hear what he had to say, alone.

By this time Murat had an inkling of the news which awaited him and hurried out of the room, the Queen upon his arm. In the small apartment, leading out of the gallery, they found Count Colonna, who came forward out of the dark corner where he had been waiting and presented his despatches.

It is a picture that stands out vividly in the imagination: The Count studying Murat's face as the latter reads the message, and glancing from time to time at the Queen, trying to read something of her husband's mind in her face; Murat blinking in the half light over the words, rejoicing in the news as he thinks of the manner in which the Congress of Legitimacy has been treating him, but endeavouring to keep his features composed and his pleasure out of his voice.

“That will spoil Metternich's sleep for a while,” one can almost hear him saying to himself. “And Talleyrand—how will he get out of this? On guard, Messieurs! You will have to exercise something besides your tongues now!”

Napoleon had escaped from Elba, and announced that he proposed to chase the Bourbons out of France, and suggested an alliance, begging Murat at the same time to place a battleship or a frigate at the disposition of his, the Emperor's, mother and sister.

Hurrying back to his guests, Murat divulged the news, and his cheer and excitement were so obvious that some of them guessed then the course which he would pursue.

The next morning Murat despatched special messengers to Vienna and London, in which he assured the governments of Austria and Great Britain that, what-

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

ever might be the result of Napoleon's raid, he himself would remain faithful to his treaty obligations.

Neither of his correspondents had the slightest belief in his protestations, and Francis, without waiting, took steps to crush him if he moved—or if he did not. But Murat's health was high and the memories of the golden years were like wine. He felt a real remorse for the part which he had played, and the splendour of Napoleon's lone-handed assault upon a world in arms appealed to every soldier-like instinct in him.

He did not forget his own ambition, though, and he desired to make himself so powerful that he could treat with either Austria or France upon terms of something like equality. It was Italy that he wanted. The great Powers would have their hands full now, and he hoped to be able to surprise the Germans while the armies of Europe were engaged with the Emperor.

Caroline, however, joined with his ministers and his Council in opposition to war. Naples and Italy had had enough, and even in the unlikely event of Murat's correspondents in the North having been accurate in their figures, or right in their appreciation of the popular feeling, it was practically certain that, whether the victor in the coming contest were to be the Emperor or the Allies, neither would allow Murat to attack Italy and rule it undisturbed.

He assured his Council that Italy was ready to rise on either side of the Po. He explained his mistrust of the Congress. He agreed that, although it would be unsafe to diminish the army in the present condition of Europe, yet Naples could not support the troops unless fresh taxes were imposed; and that being out of the question, the only alternative was to quarter them upon some-

NAPLES UNDER MURAT

body else. He went on to point out that political liberty was at the last gasp in Italy. But even that battle-cry failed to arouse the enthusiasm of his audience. Political liberty, as a theory upon which to speculate over a glass or two of wine in the cool of the evening, was well enough, but political liberty as a reason for draining the country of blood and money any longer was quite another affair. The common people cared very little, if anything at all, for it; what they wanted was food and drink, and a chance to save a little money, and marry, and be happy. The taste survives in Calabria to this day. They *like* an overlord, they *like* having somebody over them who will order their ways and provide them with work and see to their well-being, and knock their heads together when they misbehave and pat them upon the back before their fellows when they are good. It is, after all, the ideal form of Government. No other approaches in efficiency to a beneficent and intelligent autocracy. The main trouble is that very few autocracies have any intelligence. I am sure I do not know why. Logically a man who has been trained to rulership from the cradle should make a better ruler than the accident of a convention; and on the whole, one may say, he does. The Emperor of Germany, for instance, is a far better ruler than either Mr. Roosevelt, Mr. Taft, or Mr. Wilson, or any President of the French Republic that ever lived. So was King Edward VII, so was Queen Victoria; but then, from nowhere in particular and without any training at all, a Lincoln emerges and gets elected — that is the mystery which I have never been able to fathom — by a number of people whose individual opinions upon any subject of real importance are worth less than nothing!

Murat, as has been seen, made a habit of mistaking

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

craft for statesmanship, and his Council, by now, were beginning to be aware of it. Frenchmen and Neapolitans, they saw that would be extremely dangerous for both countries — particularly Naples — and they resolved to wait to declare themselves until word came from London and Vienna. Murat, however, paid no heed to their resolution or their opinion, and broke up the Council, secretly determined to make the effort.

Some of the troops with which he proposed to undertake the conquest of Italy were more fit for sneak-thieving than actual fighting against drilled men. The artillery, sappers, and cavalry were even worse than the infantry, and when we are told that the regiments of the latter were taken from the prisons and from the galleys, and that half of the generals and colonels were French, and the dissensions between the natives and the foreigners are remembered, one cannot but think that Joachim must have been a little off his head with the strain he had been enduring for the past year, if he hoped to annex Italy with such a force as that.

In reply to Murat's request for permission to pass through the Papal States, the Holy Father appointed a regency and betook himself to Genoa, accompanied by many of the Cardinals. As this occurred in the middle of Holy Week, the sacred offices were interrupted, many of the priests leaving the city to follow the Pope, and the indignation of the Romans knew no bounds. Murat wisely refrained from approaching the city and proceeded to Ancona, from whence he instructed the ambassadors at the Congress to renew his protestations of fidelity to his treaties.

This quite unnecessary insult roused Francis of Austria effectually and he despatched Frimont, Bianchi,

NAPLES UNDER MURAT

Mohr, Neipperg, and Wied, with forty-eight thousand infantry, seven thousand cavalry, and sixty-four guns, to repay Joachim for it. Besides these, Nugent had a brigade in Tuscany, the Po was fortified at Piacenza, Borgoforte, Occhiobello, and Lagoscuro by the Germans, who occupied every possible crossing and had at their backs the fortresses of Pizzighettone, Mantua, and Legnano, with detachments in Commachio and at the bridge of Goro. It was a solid affair against which Joachim was ramming his head.

He, as soon as war had been declared on the 30th of March, annexed — on paper — the districts of Cerbino, Pesaro, and Gubbio, and issued edicts vilifying in the usual manner his opponents, whom he accused of every fault of which he himself had been guilty. Also, he addressed the inattentive and careless Italians, reminding them of such grievances as he could remember and, when the stock of those ran short, inventing several entirely new ones.

He had a few partial successes at first before Frimont arrived upon the scene. Carrascosa managed to drive some Austrians — it is all but impossible to arrive at the real figures and facts of these contests, but I should be inclined to say about fifteen hundred — from Cesena. Later they came upon some more at Anzola, and these retired before them probably, or I should say certainly, under orders. At Spilimberto he had a personal brush with them, which resulted in a haphazard sort of success which he seems to have made no attempt whatever to push. A few days later, after investing Ferrara — the operation could not have been a very serious one, for it was only conducted for two and a half days — he attempted to storm the bridge-head at Occhiobello, but,

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

finding it to be out of the question, left the army encamped on the spot and returned to Bologna, where he learned what had become of two legions of his Guard which he had sent to Tuscany — for no military reason that I have been able to discover, save the very problematical one of “rousing” the Tuscans.

They were commanded by Generals Pignatelli, Strongoli, and Livron, who, being of equal rank, were to act in concert, but not to attempt to take precedence of each other — which, as one historian very truly says, was a “strange and unusual idea in the composition of the army.”

These contrived to get as far as Pistoia, where, hearing that the garrison had designs upon them, they retired in something of a hurry to Florence.

It was there that Joachim received a communication from Lord William Bentinck to the effect that, since he had broken his treaty with Francis, he could consider the treaty with England broken as well. He might well have expected this piece of information one would think, but it seems to have depressed him greatly.

The King’s edicts, too, had fallen flat. They had produced, we are told, “ promises, applause, poetic effusions, and popular orations, but neither arms nor action; thus furnishing much future work for the police, and nothing for war.”

The forces he had counted upon did not materialise, and Joachim called his ministers together. These had discovered by now that he never called upon them for advice unless he was in trouble, and their ardour and loyalty were shaken. Still, when he laid the facts before them, they gave him the best they had, in the face of the rather desperate circumstances. The army was strag-

NAPLES UNDER MURAT

gled out over a line between Reggio, Carpi, and Ravenna, without any supports or reserves, in the face of an enemy stronger, numerically and morally, and in their position one blow might be the end; so Joachim's advisers recommended him to hold on to the places he had only so long as it would take to send back the sick and the baggage, and then look for some point of attack where the result would be a little less certain.

A few days later the Germans stormed Carpi and chased General Pepes almost as far as Modena, and only Murat's appearance upon the scene halted the pursuit. On the 15th they seized Spilimberto, the defenders of which retired in considerable disorder to Sant' Ambrogio. By now, however, the advice of the Council had been carried out and the remains of the army, unhampered, were able to move about and were directed upon the Reno, Ravenna, and Forlì. The troops upon the Reno were, however, attacked by the Germans and, after a three-hours' fight, retreated upon Bologna.

Joachim, at Imola, now discovered that the Austrian army had been divided into two parts — one under Bianchi, the other under Neipperg.

The former was advancing by the Florentine Road, the latter by the Strada Emilia, the idea being to enclose Joachim and force him into a general engagement between them. They were divided by the chain of the Apennines, and Murat perceived that Neipperg, at least, was inferior to him. Fired by the memories of '96, he resolved to attack Bianchi and, if possible, cripple him before Neipperg could come to his assistance, after which he would still be able to fight Neipperg, unless things went very wrong indeed with superior numbers.

Macerata was Murat's objective, but it was twenty

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

days' march for troops who reckoned a day's work as lightly as did his. For all that, he contrived the retreat with creditable skill in spite of a scuffle with Neipperg near the Roneo.

But when the battle of Macerata was fought, Joachim's fortune, which had been so shy and fickle of late, deserted him entirely. Though he fought a stubborn enough battle, and though his own dispositions were solid and well thought out, his instruments failed him. General Maio and General Lecchi made little or no attempt to shock their opponents, allowing their men to drift into action anyhow, and, as the day waned and the Neapolitans became too listless even to fire, word came to the King from General Montigny in the Abruzzi, telling him that the Germans had taken Antrodoco and Aquila, that the people were rising for the Bourbons, and that the magistrates had transferred their allegiance, while he and the few faithful men who had remained with him had been forced back to Popoli.

At the same time, came a despatch from the Minister of War, telling him of the enemy's appearance upon the Liris, of the horrified feelings of the people, and of the helpful activities of the Carbonari in Calabria.

Joachim instantly decided to take his troops back into the Kingdom of Naples, and ordered a general retreat. Then it was that he became fully aware of the sort of staff he had been leaning upon. Some of the troops seem to have been prepared to behave themselves, had their commanders given them any opportunity of so doing, but the generals had had enough and more than enough, and, to use an Americanism, they "lay down upon him" completely.

When he called a council the next morning, they in-

NAPLES UNDER MURAT

formed him that the larger part of their men had deserted and that the rest would not obey orders. When one comes to think about it, there does not seem to be any particular reason why they should have, since no one made the faintest show of imposing any kind of discipline upon them.

The enemy advanced on either side while this discussion was in progress, and one brigade, which had obeyed the order to march and which Joachim opposed to them, rested upon their arms, and proved to be utterly indifferent to the results. On his arrival in the Abruzzi, Joachim was astounded to discover that Montigny — he of the “faithful few” — had abandoned his post at Antrodoco without even waiting for the enemy to appear, and that his unedifying conduct alone was the cause of the magistrates’ defection. Also, it was Montigny and no one else who had deliberately abandoned Aquila, although the enemy, by reason of the condition of the roads, could not have brought up the guns necessary to reduce the place.

Joachim, still dazed with this infamy, now received word, through Prince Cariati, whom he had sent to the Congress of Vienna, that the Allies were going to exterminate him, that no hope of any sort of reconciliation remained; at the same time, a letter from Napoleon censured the recklessness of his campaign and went on to say that it might prove the ruin of his own effort.

In this state of affairs, Murat bethought himself of the possibilities of a constitution as a prop to his own tottering throne. It would be funny if it were not so melancholy! A constitution! With the Austrians at his gates, an English fleet in the Bay, the entire Kingdom torn to

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

pieces, the Carbonari in every quarter, his army vanished, and his friends in flight!

Commodore Campbell had already threatened, unless the ships and the stores in the arsenal were delivered up to him, to fire a thousand rockets into the city. Poor Caroline collected some of the ministers and magistrates and asked for their advice, whereupon the Minister for Police informed her that the first assault of an enemy would ignite a conflagration in the city which nothing would be able to suppress. They were reminded, too, by a general officer, that there were still ten double ranges of batteries wherewith to defend themselves, and he suggested that Campbell was counting upon the moral effects of his threat among the people.

So Caroline, after the invariable accusations of treaty-breaking with which everybody opened verbal fire on an enemy, and the equally invariable appeal to history, stipulated for her own and her family's safe return to France in an English vessel. Caroline was a Bonaparte, and she could keep her head, even in a crisis of this sort. She had ruled wisely and well in her husband's absence, backing him up, in spite of her opposition to the war, stoutly. Now she proclaimed the terms of accommodation, and, having provided for a temporary peace, she turned to the immediate needs of the situation, and, having heartened the city militia with her own courage, she pacified and quieted the populace. With her in the palace were her sister Pauline and her uncle, Cardinal Fesch, besides her four young children, whom she decided to send to Gaeta.

Stout old Macdonald, the Minister for War, of whom Napoleon said during the Peninsular Campaign, "I would not dare to let Macdonald within sound of the

NAPLES UNDER MURAT

“pipes!” was sent to supersede Manhir, and he did presently succeed in driving the Austrians beyond the Melfa; but no further advantage was gained, because the troops with which Murat was hoping to effect a junction were stampeded at Mignano.

Murat’s reign was over. The Bourbons were upon the top of him, and all that he could do now was to escape before they closed every road. He believed that the Bourbons wished to capture him and wreak their vengeance upon him for the lean and restricted years.

Leaving the wreck of his army to Carrascosa, he made his way into Naples as the sun was dropping over the hills, and hurried by round-about ways towards the Palace. He was in civilian dress, having discarded his uniform when he left the army, but he was recognised and, to his surprise, treated by those whom he met with all the respect which had been his as a king. In the harbour he could see the British fleet, lying at anchor, and perhaps the sight was not altogether an unwelcome one, for he had learned of Caroline’s treaty with Campbell, and, little as the English might be to his taste, at least they had been worthy and steadfast enemies and infinitely better company for him than the Bourbons.

A little pleased, even through the fogs of his depression, at the manner in which he had been received by the people, he ran into the Palace, seeking for his wife. Her he found in her own apartment, in the same room where they had first heard of Napoleon’s departure from Elba, two short months before, and in which he had left her to depart upon this last disastrous campaign.

It must have been rather dark in there now that the twilight had come down, and the memories of the past must have crowded thickly about him as he entered. He

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

found Caroline alone, save for a lady-in-waiting, and he went straight to her and caught her in his arms, his voice at first too choked for utterance.

At last, when he could master his voice, he spoke, calmly enough, and his tremendous self-restraint was worthy of the old Murat of Jena and Eylau.

“We are betrayed by fortune, my dear,” he said, “and all is lost!”

Caroline was even steadier than he, and she smiled into his eyes.

“Not all,” she answered quickly, “if we preserve our honour and our constancy!”

Sitting down together, they dismissed the lady-in-waiting with instructions to gather together the few proved friends who still remained to them, and then set themselves to the preparations for their departure. An hour or more they spent together, and then Murat emerged, his head high and his face alight from the contact with his splendid wife. His ministers had assembled, and with them he arranged such of the affairs of the kingdom as admitted of arrangement, and placed them in such a shape that the Bourbon could not help but keep them so, for his own sake, and every last one of his acts and thoughts was directed towards the future welfare of his people. Nothing else appeared to have any place in his mind at all. He was cool, quiet, cheerful, and collected, heartening those around him, and as free-handed to the French who were leaving him, and the servants whom he was leaving, as though he were taking the crown instead of laying it down.

He had regained the priceless possession of hope. Napoleon’s star was still shining. France had taken him to her arms. Without the shedding of a single drop of

NAPLES UNDER MURAT

blood he had regained the throne and, though all the world might be in arms against him, he had faith in himself, the faith that moveth mountains. Murat had resolved to go and join him, and, when the world war was over, and Napoleon's foot was again upon the neck of his enemies, to return to Naples and drive Ferdinand into the sea and under it.

Caroline knew of his intention, for she let him go alone, and his instructions to Carrascosa (before the latter departed to the little house, three miles out of Capua, where Lord Burghersh, Bianchi, and Neipperg waited to arrange the terms of the treaty of Casa Lanza) show her hand plainly, for Carrascosa was told to stipulate that the property sold or given away by Murat must be guaranteed to its possessors, in order, as Joachim said, to leave him the character of a good king and that the Neapolitans might cherish his memory. He knew, and so did Caroline, exactly how long it would take Ferdinand to make himself loathed and abominated by the people whose yoke Joachim had lifted.

That these did not trust Ferdinand's eloquent vow to abstain from retaliation against those who had served Murat, was made plain in the very beginning of the negotiations, for they refused to take his personal word for the fulfilment of any part of the treaty, and demanded the guarantee of the Emperor of Austria. It was little security enough, in all conscience, for the guarantees of Francis had been the jest of Europe for years past, but they seemed to think that it might bind the hands of the "Butcher King" for a while.

On the same evening that the treaty was ratified, Joachim departed incognito for Pozzuoli. From there he went on to Ischia, where he was received with all the

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

respect due to a monarch, and on the 22d he sailed for France with a few friends. Caroline, as regent, still remained in the Palace, and the Neapolitan populace, in the absence of the troops, went off their heads. They had been hard held lately, and now they made up for it. They broke open the prisons and committed atrocities that do not bear writing about. Even the presence of three hundred marines from the British fleet could do little to control the mob, but they produced a temporary calm, during which Caroline embarked on one of the British men-of-war with Macdonald and two others.

CHAPTER XVI

MURAT'S LAST DAYS

Naples in Anarchy—Entrance of Austrians—Murat's Repulse by Napoleon and by Louis—His Demon of Ill-luck—Ship-wrecked—Aid in Corsica—Emperor of Austria's Proposal—Attempt Against Naples—Murat Betrayed into Ferdinand's Hands—Murat's "Trial"—Letter to His Wife—Before His "Judges"—A Brave Death—Ferdinand, the "Butcher King."

NO sooner was Caroline on board than the city broke out again and anarchy reigned, until the Austrians sent in some troops in answer to the frantic appeals of the magistrates, and these, with the British marines, set upon the mob, killing a hundred or more of the worst of them before order was restored.

The riot and the subsequent slaughter had apparently no effect upon the people's feelings, for on the very next day they illuminated the city gorgeously and the sound of their merriment could be heard out at sea. All the ships in the harbour were dressed, even that one which sheltered Caroline and her followers, and on the 23d the Austrians entered with Crown Prince Leopold of Bourbon at their head, who graciously acknowledged the howls of the crowd. Everything that suggested Murat—flags, statues, pictures—was destroyed, and Caroline, from the deck of the British ship, watched the general jubilation over her husband's fall.

Joachim, passing Gaeta, saw his standard still flying from that fortress, and, even then, would have landed and joined the garrison had he been permitted to do

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

so, but the port was blocked up with vessels and he was forced to proceed on his way.

He reached Fréjus on the 28th of May, but, as the shore became clearer and the outline of the coast grew into the horizon, the hopes with which he had left Caroline began to weaken, and he became oppressed with a sense of helplessness, seeming to feel that he was struggling against hopeless odds. The sight of the country he had once served so well, and where his name had been a household word — he was known as “the Achilles of France” — struck chill upon his heart. He had loved his mistress, and had never counted the cost, but he had sided against her, too, and, as he well knew, a country, like a woman, forgets a thousand acts of devotion in the face of one affront. He had no friends there any more, save, perhaps, his brother-in-law; but Napoleon had a woman’s memory for past wrongs, too, and, though his letters had been full of affection while the issue of his own attempt was still problematical, now that he had succeeded, he could repay to the uttermost farthing.

He might need Murat to lead the cavalry — nay, as it seemed, he *must* need him, for he could not, surely, allow a personal spite to prevent him from using that weapon of weapons when the hilt of it was held out to him! Murat was not the only one, either. Ney had sworn to bring the Emperor back in a cage like a wild beast — and he had taken Ney to his heart as soon as they met. Marmont had deliberately gone over to the enemy — taking his corps with him. Indeed, of all Napoleon’s former adherents it might be said that only Soult had proved to be the true mettle, for he had not laid down his arms till after the Emperor had descended from the throne, and he had fought his last fight, with

MURAT'S LAST DAYS

as high a courage and as steadfast a heart as his first.

Soult had never surrendered, nor had he ever allowed it to be said that force of arms had compelled him to submit to the Allies. He had obeyed the decision of his countrymen, and that was all.

The evil days upon which he had fallen had eaten into Murat's self-confidence badly, and he dared not even proceed to Paris, but remained at Toulon. From there he wrote to Fouché, whom he still imagined to have kindly feelings towards him — Fouché — because in his prosperity he had befriended him.

"You know," he wrote, "the motive and the result of the war in Italy. Arrived in France, I now offer my arm to the Emperor and trust that Heaven may allow me to atone for the disasters of the King by the success of the Captain."

Fouché presented the letter to Napoleon without comment, and the latter read it. "What treaties of peace have I concluded with the King of Naples since the war of 1814?" he asked, handing it back, and Fouché bowed himself out.

Murat remained at Toulon, growing daily more hopeless, although the inhabitants treated him with great respect. But he had passed the point where the respect or otherwise of private citizens could affect him. Then came Waterloo, and the South of France took on the political aspect of the unhappy kingdom which he had just quitted. The Monarchists rose and smote out right and left, massacring their political opponents and looting everything that those unfortunates left behind them. Marshal Brune, who had previously been sent by the Emperor to maintain order in the South, was torn to

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

pieces by a mob, and Joachim was forced to hide himself as best he could from the "White Terror," which was overrunning the land.

From his hiding-place, he wrote again to Fouché, but that adaptable gentleman was now Minister to Louis XVIII, and vouchsafed no answer. Fouché was one of those human chameleons that fit themselves into any colour-scheme, and all the wars, plots, revolutions, and Armageddons of the past years had passed him by. He had just succeeded in betraying Wellington, to whom he had promised Napoleon's plan of campaign, by sending the plans and then taking steps to see that the messenger was delayed long enough on the frontier to make the delivery of them useless; and now he was more monarchist than the poor old monarch himself, hunting out his late associates mercilessly. Murat begged for a passport to England, but no notice was taken of his appeal. In despair and having escaped, by what seemed to be a miracle, from the hands of the Marquis de la Rivière, who owed his life to Joachim's favour, he wrote to Louis himself, requesting Fouché to deliver his letter. But Fouché sent no word, and no answer came from Louis, who probably never saw the letter at all; and, seeing no other hope for him, Murat resolved to go to Paris and place himself in the hands of the Allied Sovereigns. They could not, in reason, blame him for doing to them that which they had all, at various periods during the past twenty years, done to one another. He had been a great figure — a greater figure than any of them. They had now no reason for betraying his confidence; and they were neither vengeful nor bloodthirsty. He would be safer with them than among his own countrymen. His idea was to travel by sea — for to attempt a land jour-

MURAT'S LAST DAYS

ney would have been something not far removed from suicide — to Havre de Grâce, whence he could make his way to Paris with little risk. So, having made arrangements for a vessel, and chosen a wild and unfrequented part of the coast and a dark night for his embarkation, he set out.

But the vessel, for some reason or other, did not arrive at the spot that night and Murat was compelled to retire among the rocks and vineyards for shelter, and here he remained, hoping against hope, until the darkness gave way to the summer dawn, and the light from the faint topaz-coloured east on the waters showed nothing that looked like the craft he had bargained for.

Perhaps it was meant, that crushing disappointment, for there is no saying, in the light of the conditions which reigned at the Capital, whether he would ever have reached the Sanctuary of the Allies at all. The White Terror, a plague as fierce and irresponsible as the Red one of a quarter of a century earlier, was raging uncontrollable and uncontrollable, and the deeds of Murat, as King of Naples in 1814, would not have counted then, for the Emperor's broken Marshal. Fouché's agents very nearly caught him that time, and he had to fly from cover to cover like a hunted hare; but he escaped from them, and a while later slipped away in a little ship that was bound for Corsica.

Even now the demon of his ill-luck, still unsatiated, continued to pursue him, for after two days a storm overtook them which forced them to lower their single, three-cornered sail, and let the boat run under bare poles for a day and a half, at the end of which time, when the little ship was filling rapidly, they were picked up by

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

the *Corriera*, on her way to Bastia. A large French vessel which they had spoken a few hours earlier had refused to have anything to do with them, and when this other one, more charitable, came alongside, Murat, uncovering his face, told the Captain his name.

“A Frenchman,” he said. “I speak to Frenchmen, and, nearly shipwrecked, I ask aid from those who are themselves out of danger.”

Greatly to his surprise and his gratification, he was treated with every honour and welcomed on board as a king, and, the next day, he landed at Bastia.

He had come at a moment when Corsica was in the throes of a civil war of its own, between the followers of the Bourbons, the adherents of Napoleon, and a party who, sitting on the fence between, called themselves Independents. Many of Murat’s old-time companions-in-arms had been natives of Corsica, and, the Napoleonists and Independents being in the majority, they called upon Joachim to help them crush the remainder and rule over the island afterwards. This was the sort of invitation which the fiery cavalryman was always only too ready to accept, and his heart soared into the heavens!

One begins to understand the reason why Napoleon could hold all Europe down, when one reads the adventures of Murat and Ney and Soult. Even when the Great Force behind them was removed, and they were struggling single-handed, while the least and weakest chance remained to continue fighting, they would fight. They never counted the odds, they never parleyed with a compromise, repeated defeats never cooled their courage; they would follow as hard upon the faintest ray of hope as they had galloped into the blazing sunlight of an assured victory.

MURAT'S LAST DAYS

It was not long before Joachim became the object of the deepest suspicion to such authorities as still remained in Corsica and he removed himself to Vescovado, and thence to Ajaccio, with the enthusiastic assistance of the discontented element in the island. Once more, under the action of the popular support, he began to feel a king, and frequently remarked that, if strangers rallied to him in this fashion, the Neapolitans might be expected to rise *en masse* at his appearance. "I accept it as a happy augury!" he exclaimed.

It seems incredible that, after his experience among them, Joachim should have an illusion left about his late subjects. But he evidently had, and he determined to descend upon Salerno, where three thousand of his former troops were quartered. They were, he was sure, discontented with the Bourbons — being what they were, they were bound to be discontented with any sort of established authority — and with these he expected to march towards Avellino, increasing his following as he went, throwing a panic into the capital before him; in fine, repeating the Napoleonic performance, and seating himself firmly upon the throne before the Austrians could descend upon him.

He had completed his arrangements, when he received a letter from Maceroni, informing him that the latter was upon his way to Ajaccio, and that he was bringing good news with him.

He waited a day for him, and Maceroni, when he appeared, presented Murat with a note written in French:

"His Majesty the Emperor of Austria [it ran] will grant an asylum to King Joachim on the following conditions:

"First. That the King shall assume a private name;

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

and the Queen having taken that of Lipano, the same is proposed to the King.

“Second. That the King shall reside in one of the cities of Bohemia, Moravia, or Upper Austria, or, if he should prefer it, in the country; but in one of these provinces.

“Third. That he shall pledge his word of honour not to quit the Austrian territory without the express permission of the Emperor, and to live as a private individual, subject to the laws of the Austrian Monarchy.”

It was signed by Metternich, and dated from Paris, on the 1st of September.

But Joachim, in spite of his friend’s entreaties, would have none of it.

“Quem Deus vult perdere, prius dementat.” Joachim’s soul was aflame now and he spoke contemptuously of the offer.

“A prison, then,” he cried, “is to be my asylum! A prison is a tomb, and nothing remains for a King who has lost his throne but the death of a soldier. You have come too late, Maceroni. I have already determined on my fate. . . . If I fail, imprisonment must be the natural consequence, but I will never consent to drag out the miserable remnant of my days in slavery. Bonaparte resigned the throne of France, yet he returned to it in the same way which I now attempt. . . . I have not resigned my throne or forfeited my right, therefore a fate worse than imprisonment would be contrary to human justice; but be assured that Naples shall be my St. Helena!”

On the night of the 28th of September, the forlorn hope embarked at Ajaccio. The weather was mild and clear, the sea calm, and both the troops and their leader happy and confident. They did not know that Ferdinand

MURAT'S LAST DAYS

had had intelligence of every move that Joachim had made since his landing in Corsica, through one of Joachim's own servants, a man of the name of Cabarelli. This man, who owed everything that he possessed to Murat's kindness, accosted him at Ajaccio, and, while offering himself to his old master's service, begged him not to attempt the crazy enterprise. In this he was acting according to his orders, for the Neapolitan Government was frightened; but, having discovered, doubtless from Joachim's own rash words, that he was bent upon the affair and would allow nothing to stop him, Cabarelli forwarded to his employers Joachim's entire plans, preparations, and movements.

The only thing that he did not learn was the destination of the little force, and the lack of that knowledge prevented Ferdinand from taking any steps towards dealing with Joachim when he should arrive. Ferdinand was afraid, too, of any rumour spreading, for Murat had still many friends in the Kingdom and he, Ferdinand, had none.

For a week all went well with the expedition, but on the seventh day a storm arose which lasted for three days and which scattered the little fleet hopelessly. Joachim's boat chanced to find its way into the Gulf of Santa Eufemia, and Joachim, after some hesitation, resolved to stake all upon the throw and land at Pizzo, with the twenty-eight men remaining to him.

This was on the 8th of October. It was a festa and, in consequence, the militia were paraded in the market place, when the party came ashore. No sooner were these on land than they raised Murat's standard and advanced upon the town, shouting, "Long live King Murat!"

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

But there was no response and the onlookers remained silent. It was as though a cold mist had settled upon the sunny morning, and Murat hastened on to Monteleone, where he trusted to the gratitude of the citizens for many favours which he had done them in the past. But two Bourbon adherents — a certain Captain Trentacapilli and an agent of the Duke dell' Infantado — hastily collected a following of men and weapons and met Joachim on the road, where they opened fire upon him.'

He, however, did not return their fire, but only saluted them, whereupon, taking heart from his inaction, they fired again, killing one and injuring another of his followers. The remainder prepared to defend themselves, but Joachim prevented them.

Now a crowd began to collect, and very soon the only avenue of escape for Joachim was by the steep cliff, down which he ran, hailing, as he arrived upon the beach, his ship, which was still but a little distance from the land. His captain, Barbara, though — another upon whom Joachim had lavished every sort of kindness and whom he had raised from nothing at all to the rank of a Baron — paid no heed to him and sailed away with the booty which he had on board.

Then Joachim, despairing at last, attempted to make his escape in a small skiff which lay on the beach; but it was too heavy for him to move, and the next moment Trentacapilli and his rabble were upon him, striking him in the face and tearing off the jewels which he wore upon his cap and breast, and bellowing their insults at him while he was being led up to the grey, straggling castle; and only when he was inside the gates and out of sight did their howling cease.

MURAT'S LAST DAYS

A tiny light penetrated through the gloom that surrounded him when Captain Stratti, upon hearing who the prisoner was, treated him with marked deference and respect, addressing him as "Majesty" and securing for him the best room that he could. General Nunziante also, upon arriving, paid him every mark of respect, and endeavoured, as far as it was possible for him to do, to show his sympathy for the unfortunate and betrayed captive.

This treatment appears to have restored Murat considerably, and that night he slept soundly and peacefully. No idea of the sort of vengeance which Ferdinand and his abominable government were preparing for him appears to have entered his head, and he still seems to have thought it possible to come to some arrangement with that royal hyena, for he remarked to Nunziante, the day before his execution, that it would be easy to come to an accommodation with Ferdinand by the latter yielding to him the Kingdom of Naples and by his yielding to Ferdinand his claims to Sicily.

Ferdinand, in the meanwhile, having recovered from the nightmare of terror which had seized him upon the receipt of the news of Joachim's landing at Pizzo, allowed his joy and relief full play. At first he wanted to imprison every one who could even be suspected of a suspicion in the direction of Muratism, but his courage failed him, and he had to content himself with despatching Canosa — who may I think, without injustice, be classed among the three or four worst and most despicable characters that ever infested that sunny land — into Calabria with *carte blanche* to represent his master.

The order for Murat's execution was sent down by signal telegraph, and, that done, a court-martial was com-

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

posed to try him! Seven "judges" were chosen, three of whom, besides the Procurator General, had been raised from poverty and obscurity and loaded with money and honours by Murat himself; and, in order to save themselves from any taint of common gratitude or even decency, which might bring them into disfavour with their present sovereign lord, they first of all thanked the latter humbly for deigning to make use of them, and, by their bearing and remarks during the trial, made it impossible for Murat to sit in the same room with them, even had he desired to do so.

In the round tower, Joachim spent the last night of his life, mercifully undisturbed by the knowledge of the Court which was to go through the farce of trying him. It was long after daylight when Nunziante entered, so softly that the sleeping man did not awaken. Nor did Nunziante arouse him — an act of charity which must surely have been put to his credit when the long roll-call summoned him in his turn!

On Joachim's awakening and opening his eyes, Nunziante broke the news of his approaching trial as gently as possible.

"I am lost, then!" exclaimed Murat. There were tears in his eyes, and Nunziante himself was unable to speak for emotion, but he brought his prisoner pen and paper.

"My dear Caroline [wrote Murat]: My last hour has struck. Within a few moments I shall have ceased to live and you will have lost your husband. Do not forget me! My life has never been stained by an act of injustice. Adieu, my Achilles, my Letitia, my Lucian, and my Louisa. Show yourselves worthy of me. I leave you without a Kingdom, without wealth, in the midst of

MURAT'S LAST DAYS

many enemies. Be united and rise above misfortune. Look upon yourselves as you are, not as you might be, and God will bless your humility. Do not curse my memory. Know that my greatest misery in this last hour of my life is to die far from my children. Receive your father's blessing — receive my embraces and my tears. May the memory of your unhappy father be ever present with you.

“ JOACHIM.”

In the letter he placed some locks of hair.

With infamous cynicism, a defender had been appointed for him before the Court, but Murat, rising above his misery, rejected the melancholy foolery with a contempt the expression of which must have cut into the horny feelings of his Judges and left them sore for many a long day.

He was their King, he told them, but went on to observe: “ If I am to be tried in the light of a Marshal of France, I may be tried by a Council of Marshals; if as a General, by Generals. But before I descend so low as to submit to the decision of the Judges who have been selected *many pages must be torn from the history of Europe!*”

To Storace, who had been appointed to defend him, and who now begged to be allowed to do what he could, Joachim replied:

“ You cannot save my life. Allow me to save my dignity. I forbid you to speak in my defence.”

Storace, who, with Stratti and Nunziante, appears as one of the three rays of human light in the whole horrid affair, left him sadly, as the magistrate entered and with gusto proceeded to torment the victim with questions. But he did not get very far before Joachim turned upon him.

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

"I am Joachim Murat," he replied, "King of the Two Sicilies and your King. Leave me and relieve my prison of your presence!"

It seems to have occurred to him that, possibly, Ferdinand was revenging himself now for the murder of the Duc d'Enghien — for he mentioned the tragedy and swore to Stratti that he had had no hand in it. He had been Governor of Paris when the young Duke was kidnapped and shot, but he could have done nothing to save him. Murat was speaking the truth. The Duc d'Enghien was murdered by Talleyrand, who devised the whole affair and drove Napoleon into giving the order by suggesting the result of it upon the Royalists who had, then, made several attempts upon the First Consul's life.

Murat then thanked Stratti for his kindness and begged to be left alone, when he crossed his arms on his breast and stared at the portraits of his family. His first notice of the sentence which had been pronounced upon him came through a priest, whose name was Masdea. The latter, as he told Joachim, had had cause to be grateful to him in the past for some unexpected help in the building of a Church, and it was that which had induced him to brave the displeasure of Joachim's enemies now. He assured Joachim that his prayers would be offered up for the repose of his soul, and begged him to prepare himself as a Christian to appear before his Maker; and Joachim did so, Masdea says, with philosophic resignation.

The "Court" by now had its sentence ready:

"Joachim Murat, by the fortune of arms, having returned into that private life in which he was born, and having ventured with twenty-eight comrades to attempt this rash enterprise, not trusting to the force of arms

MURAT'S LAST DAYS

[this, by the way, seems to be a queer sort of grievance] but to rebellion, has excited the people to rise against the lawful sovereign, endeavoured to revolutionise the Kingdom and Italy, and is therefore condemned to die as a public enemy, by the law made during the Decennium, and which is still maintained in full vigour."

Joachim seemed to be very little interested in the reading of his doom. Except for an occasional glance of cold contempt, he paid no attention to the herald or his message.

Then he was led down some stone steps into a sort of court, which may be seen to this day, and placed against the wall on the left of the foot of the stairs.

He refused to have his eyes bound and looked calmly on while the muskets of the firing party were being loaded. When all was ready, he straightened himself up and looked steadily at his executioners.

"Spare my face," he said, "and aim at my heart."

So died Joachim Murat, in the forty-eighth year of his life, and he met his end with a fearlessness and dignity which shone the brighter for the squalid surroundings in which he displayed them.

There is a story still current in the Peninsula that, after his death, his head was cut off, by Ferdinand's order, and carried to Naples, in order that the "Butcher King" might be sure that his gallant enemy was no more.

One would have imagined that the gruesome proof would have satisfied him and, having seen it, he would have been content to bury it decently. But the report goes on to say that nothing would induce him to part with it afterwards and that he kept it in a specially con-

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

structed case, under lock and key, by the side of his bed. Here, whenever his crazy panics seized him, he could open the box and finger the head and reassure himself again.

And all this happened, not in the time of Caligula or Tiberius, but three years before the birth of Queen Victoria.

CHAPTER XVII

ITALIAN SEAS

Our Moods and the Seas—Memories in Landscapes—The Healing of the Sea—A Vision in the Bay of Naples—Marion Crawford's Yacht Expected—The Family Together at Leghorn—Lady Paget—A Bathing Scene—Hugh Fraser—“Spannocchi” for Dinner—The Avenging Boatman—Livorno, an Anomaly—Sunset on the Mare Ligure—Bay of Spezia, a Splurge of Colour and Light—A Hail Storm in Venice—The Joy of a Gondola—Moods of Venice—A Giorgione Beauty—The Nurseries of Venice—Her Shops—Saints and Heresies of the Thirteenth Century.

LET us come back to happier themes! Many and enchanting books have been written about Italian cities and Italian country, but none about our Italian seas. People who look at the map may think this a limited subject; there is the Mediterranean and there is the Adriatic, what more can be said? *Amici miei*, to a sea-lover there are as many seas as ports; the dear salt water and the sunrise and the sunset know it, and have a separate caress for each. They make—or fit into—the thousand moods of mind that colour a pilgrim's life, and the pictures of them in my gallery of remembrance are clearer than any of my landscapes and more helpful—because they never hurt. The landscapes, all except the loveliest ones where the spirit poised for one longing instant—like a bird on the topmast of a ship and, like the bird, was given no more than time to take breath and wing away again—are mostly inhabited. Here your friend quarrelled with you; there your true love kissed you and betrayed; further on your child was sick and every aspect of the most beautiful scenery in the world brings back only the

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

poignant watches when a flush of colour in the little face sent you crazy with joy and something wrong again with the little pulse froze your heart with fear. On land we cannot get away from ourselves and others; earth is greedily dominant, monstrously exacting. But the sea repudiates all individual ties. You must be empty of yourself or it will not speak to you at all. Its laws are not our laws, and the first thing it does, if you are docile to its magic, is to wash out your personality, and, oh, how glad some of us are — or would be — if we only could utterly forget that irritant, insistent factor of existence!

In our long wanderings most paths, as we look back on them, show the little red stains where we cut our feet; we have left shreds of our soul's garments on many a thorn by the way; but for me, and I fancy for some of you others, the breath and the sound and the touch of the sea has been nothing but coolness and healing, a sun-bath for life's chillinesses, a fountain of strength in its languors. I think I should know now the right point to make for, according to the distemper that might be assailing me; and, though twenty years ago I sought and loved the onslaught of the Atlantic and the Valhalla of the March tides in the Channel, to-day I would fare no further than my home seas, those that lap and sing on the Italian shores.

I was sailing up into the Bay of Naples once, just as the morning had conquered the last star; the sky was a faint milky blue, and the mountains were cowled outlines, very dark and still. Not a breath stirred the sea, not a sound came from the land. Suddenly from the shadows that were neither land nor sea, I saw coming towards me a tall glorious form, floating on the water, pointing to the sky, clothed in long straight robes of white, mak-

ITALIAN SEAS

ing for open sea with the steady rush of a seabird on rested pinions. It took all the growing daylight to itself — it *was* the daylight, for a few breathless seconds — a vision of the Immaculate Conception, it seemed to me; then the music of ripple on prow whispered across the water, the sun leapt up behind Sant' Angelo; I rubbed my eyes and, lo, a slender vessel with snowy sails, tall and narrow, from some strange port, such sails as our seamen never unfurled. She brought the wind as she had taken the daylight, and a moment later she swept past in her immaculate pride and was gone.

I always rather resented the advent of battleships and royal yachts and gaudy truck of that kind in our Southern waters, but the private yachts inspired us with a pleasant, mysterious interest that was not unwelcome. Once, when we were watching anxiously for my brother, during his venturesome sail from New York to Naples, the children were cruising round the Bay not far from Naples. A large beautiful yacht was seen to come in and cast anchor off Santa Lucia, and at once the greatest excitement prevailed on the Crawford felucca. Was that the *Alda*? Oh, surely it must be! At once the *Margherita* headed for the port, and the nearer she came to the new arrival the surer was everybody that the *Alda* — which none of them had seen, as Marion had just bought her — had reached port at last. How well she had stood the voyage! No sign of the heavy weather mentioned in the wire from Gibraltar! No sign of the Padrone either, but, of course, he would have had to go on shore to report himself and get his harbour papers from the Consul. What was this? Dark-faced sailors in fezes? How like Marion to pick up a Lascar crew in New York! Let us row round her and hail somebody —

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

good Heavens! The first shout brought a dozen lovely Turkish ladies to the cabin windows, smiling, interested, only too ready to ask the pretty boatful on board. The children stared, open-mouthed! Then a burst of uncontrollable laughter shook the *Margherita* from stem to stern. Papa had certainly not brought a harem from New York! "A casa," came the order to the grinning sailors, and the *Margherita* turned tail and ran for home.

There is a busy unromantic seaport called Livorno, a long way up the coast from Naples, a Tuscan town of white streets and shadeless squares, all alive with commerce, and, until I came to years of reason, represented to me by the huge flapping straw hats, fine as silk and pale gold in colour, which we children regarded as signals of summer when, on the first hot day, the ribbons that held them were tied under our chins, and we were admonished, on pain of sunstrokes and spankings, not to take them off. I had among my possessions a toy Swiss cottage all made of the same pretty straw, and I imagined that "Leghorn" was a straw city with bunches of red poppies and blue ribbons on the house-tops for ornament. It was rather a blow to discover, on being taken there when I was seven years old, to find that the only traces of my toy city were the thin golden strings which most of the women were plaiting with lightning quickness as they walked in the streets or sat in the doorways. After that, as I grew older, Leghorn meant just the sea in some of its most enchanting aspects, for it was very rarely that we missed our few weeks of bathing there in September, if we had spent the summer in the North. It was the beginning of the autumn home-coming; we took an apartment on the long bright boulevard that faces the sea, the cook and one or two of the

ITALIAN SEAS

servants came up from Rome to look after us, and, always, we had a royally good time. The last, I think, was the best of all, happening after a memorable summer in the Bagni de Lucca, which I have described elsewhere. My sister had just become engaged, and her fiancé, Erich von Rabe, of course followed us to Leghorn. Hugh Fraser was there, occupied mostly, it seemed to me, in saving the Paget children from getting drowned, since they would attempt to follow their indomitable young mother in her long swims out in the deep. Lady Paget did everything beautifully; she was built like a goddess and could not do anything else, whether she rode or danced or glided about in great old rooms or flowery gardens; but she never seemed more of a goddess than when she stood for an instant in her clinging draperies with her arms above her head and then leapt, like a curved arrow, out and down into the sun-kissed waves. One held one's breath while they engulfed her — and then, yards beyond, up came that proud small head, and away she would go, with long easy strokes, a being at one with the sun and the sea — a joy to behold.

All that was in the morning, when the spaces under the big tents on the outrunning piers of the "stabilimenti" were crowded to the very edge with checrys, chattering groups, the ladies embroidering as fast as they talked, the children romping, the young men making love, and the old people, who would not face the cold joy of a plunge, smiling benignly on it all. The piers were low, and a sudden gust of wind would fling the salt water up without warning; then there were shrieks mingled with laughter, flurrying of skirts and scraping of chairs and snatching up babies, and all the fun of settling down again, only to renew the game at the next shower. This gather-

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

ing only took place in the morning. As soon as the sun was right overhead, the ladies packed their fancy work into their reticules, wiped the remains of "ciambelle" from the children's mouths, straightened their hats — all with an incessant fire of chatter like that of a tree full of roosting sparrows suddenly disturbed — and away everybody trailed along the blazing white boulevard for home, mid-day dinner, and the rapturous quiet of the siesta afterwards.

I believe I was a little jealous, even then, of the kind of official ownership which the Ambassador and his family seemed to claim in the man who, though neither of us dreamed it yet, was very soon to be my husband. Anyway, I permitted myself an occasional mood of pleasant melancholy towards evening when my own dear people, like all the others who had any deference at all for public opinion, were driving round and round the public gardens, listening to the band. Two of our party had agreed to slap public opinion quite brutally in the face; these were my erratic sister and her equally erratic fiancé. They hired a little sailing boat, and day after day, towards four o'clock, went off by themselves, unchaperoned save by the boatman, for long expeditions, whence they returned, gloriously happy and hungry, just in time for a very late dinner. Once and once only they lured me out—why, I could not imagine at the moment, as I was a bad sailor in those days and did not in the least want to go, but I soon found out their wicked motive. I had taken it upon myself to order the meals while we were at Leghorn, as my mother thought it would be good practice for me. Now there was one dish which we all, except Annie and Erich, particularly disliked, a fry of very bony, very rank-smelling crayfish, called

ITALIAN SEAS

“spannocchi.” After one trial I had steadily refused to have it brought to the table. But those two young monsters liked “spannocchi,” and they laid their plot quite cleverly and everything turned out just as they intended. We beat out to sea, the weather was squally, and in a short time I was lying, a seasick heap, in the bottom of the boat, begging with tears to be taken home. This was what they had been waiting for. “Not unless you promise us spannocchi for dinner to-morrow!” they exclaimed in a breath, grinning down at me in my misery. They looked as big and wicked as the pictures of the demon lover in our old ballad book, when he is sailing the faithless wife to hell!

Of course I promised — and was a most unpopular person with the rest of the family at dinner-time the next night. But their boatman avenged me in the end. The day before we returned to Rome they took leave of him with a little present, and he, who had all along imagined them to be a young married couple, because they came unaccompanied, testified his gratitude and goodwill in true Italian fashion, by crying enthusiastically: “Heaven bless you, my good Signori, and may it be *a fine boy!*”

Annie put her head down and ran for home, and Erich was not allowed to come to dinner that night.

Livorno is an anomaly, an Italian city with no history, no ancient monuments, no works of art. In fact, it always seemed to me less Italian than any spot I knew in the whole country, but in the days when we used to frequent it I took that, as one took everything else in that cheerful age, for granted, and it was only long afterwards

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

that I gave myself the trouble to hunt up the causes of the phenomenon. Then I learnt that down to the days of the Medici it was a small fishing village with a few hundred inhabitants, bearing, for some unknown reason, the name of another tiny place further north, Livorno Vercellese. The Medici first noted its possibilities, and set to work to make it the real port of Florence, till then largely dependent for such a commodity on Pisa, a little further up the coast. Pisa, the ancient rival of Genoa and Venice, still sick with memories of her past greatness and, since 1405, the bought-and-paid-for fief of Florence, was always seething with disaffection and conspiracy. Its last desperate effort at retrieving its independence was made in 1494, and the Florentines were put to the trouble of besieging it and taking it by force. It was some sixty or seventy years later (I think during the reign of Francesco, the father of Marie de Medici) that Livorno recommended itself to the ruler of the Republic as a fine spot for a port that would have no disturbing memories of independence to interfere with its usefulness. In order to insure this they did not colonise it with Italians at all, but craftily invited the more commercially-minded among the malcontents of all Europe to come and open up trading houses there. The invitation was eagerly accepted: persecuted Catholics from England and Germany, Moors from Spain, Jews in great numbers from all parts came, settled, and flourished, the Jews of course outnumbering all the rest, so that the Leghorn population is largely Jewish to this day. But there are also several old English merchant houses that, while still affecting to regard England as "home," are deeply rooted in the bright little city on the Ligurian Sea, and very kind

ITALIAN SEAS

and hospitable were their representatives to us. I remember certain commodities — great chests of tea, rolls of English flannel, and fine table linen — my mother always sent for to one of these Leghorn merchants, and I fancy it is due to the little English-speaking community that the town is generally known by that barbarous travesty of its Italian name. In our times it has, of course, all the unsightly riches of a great modern military and commercial centre — foundries, docks, ship-yards, fortifications, naval arsenals, and all the rest of it — but its real attractions lie in the marvellous freshness of its air and its unbroken sea-line, changing in tint at every hour of the day and taking on certain splendours that I never remember seeing elsewhere. Livorno always seems cool, for when the sun is shining his hottest the breeze never fails, and the billows roll in and break in laughter and thunder on the rocks and toss their spray almost to the windows of your room, where the light comes up in a glow of green and gold through the Venetians and the wind plays games with the clean white curtains all day long.

But it is at evening that the Mare Ligure takes you and holds you with a spell of its own. At sunset the wind generally dies down, and then the sun sinks slowly over a softly-moving but untroubled sea. The sky clears of its dancing clouds and becomes — not sky, somehow, but a fathomless infinity of breathing rose and topaz, transparent and liquid like jewelled wine. And every ripple and dimple of the water soaks up the transcendent flush, swaying rhythmically, and smoothing out into vast pools of melting mother-of-pearl, in which that living wet crimson seems to lie like a transparent veil over deeper tints that float beneath. When the sun is gone, the red deep-

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

ens to the velvet of a dark June rose, and the western sky is flame, not light; but hurrying night has chilled the east behind you, and now every ripple is violet blue on its hither side, the golden glow recedes further and further towards the west, is sucked away in the trail of the sun at last, and then nothing is left of the day but a forsaken sweep of primrose and the wraith of a newborn star.

For sheer splurge of colour and light one must go further north and be out in the Bay of Spezia some September noon, when the harbour is full of white battleships all beaconed with signals like strung flowers, and the bands are playing madly and salutes are crashing through the music for some royal holiday. The white town and the green hills behind it seem to thrill visibly in unison, and the sea is cobalt that would make your eyes ache but for the fringe of feathery white ripples that the breeze combs up all over its surface, and the sky is transparent turquoise, and night seems a thousand years away. Further on yet Genoa the Superb has a sea as blue, sky as stainless, but she dominates in her white and emerald loveliness so that her setting is almost effaced. One forgets to notice the steps of the throne where Sovereign Beauty queens it so royally.

Then cross the plain to Venice, the witch who holds East and West in her soft hands and plays with their riches as a millionaire's child might slip a rain of gold pieces from one palm to another, in idleness, recking nothing of their value. Sea and sky, priceless palace and empty island — it is all hers — she can never exhaust her past, and our century, jejune and vulgar as it is, only seems to touch her to a scornful smile. But Venice can tremble still. Once in many years there sweeps down on

ITALIAN SEAS

her one of Nature's handfuls of retribution — a storm that makes her quake to her artificial incredible foundations. I saw one such. It was in May, Venice's most perfect month. We had been out to the Lido that morning, bathing in water smooth as cream; there was not a cloud in the sky. We had barely got home when inky darkness descended, and out of it burst a gale that lashed the Grand Canal to fury, and a machine-gun fire of hail was flung against the windows, to result, an instant later, in a crash of broken glass and tumbling bricks that was truly appalling. Through the tumult came shrieks and cries. Every window in the Ducal Palace was smashed, and most of the others in the town; when it was over — the whole thing did not last more than twenty minutes — I went out on our balcony and picked up, from the thick layer lying there, hailstones as big as pigeons' eggs. The next day we went out again to the Lido, and where a long green pergola of vines had shaded the way to the bathing establishment now stood a bare tracery of dry branches. Not a single leaf was left.

But generally the Adriatic waits on Venice with subservient calm, and one can float over those vast yet not unpictured lagoons in still assurance that one's reveries will not be disturbed. I doubt whether such lengths of languorous idling be good for young strong people, but as a rest-cure for tired ones there can be nothing more complete. The shape and build of the gondola (what a perfect name for the gliding sinuous thing!) was evolved by an artist in comfort; the enormous leather cushions let you sink into their thickness as far as you please without ever touching the limit of their pleasant elasticity. Whether cowled in to keep off the sun's rays in the day or uncovered to give you all the coolness of the evening,

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

the gondola seat relieves you of all responsibility for your body; it holds you as an experienced nurse holds a tired child; and in its silent swan-like rush through the water you get just the sense of motion necessary to keep your nerves employed yet soothed. With the right companion, what talks are possible, as you glide out in the last flush of evening towards the more distant lagoons and wait for the moon to come up out of Istria, across the sea! Your gondolier, silent as Charon, is behind you and you forget his existence. And all the rest is behind, too, but very far behind: daily life with its horrid strident claims and calculations that won't even leave honeymooning couples alone! Time has ceased, and the world is standing still to let you look at life in its beauty and kiss its face in its peace. When at last you say, without turning your head, "A casa, Sandruccio!" your black swan quivers an instant from low stern to dark arched prow, swings round in the smallest space any boat did ever turn in, and you float back to the regular rhythm of Sandruccio's twenty-foot oar, till a necklace of lights lies low on the land and the faintest of songs — a very mist of music — is wasted over the water. "Alla Pizzetta?" enquires Sandruccio, speaking for the first time and in a voice expressing much amused indulgence for dreaming lovers. A few minutes later he is imperiously ordering fellow-gondoliers out of his way to the steps, is holding the side of the swan the eighth of an inch off the grind of the stone, and you and your other self dance on shore to become light-hearted young people, keeping time surreptitiously to the gay waltz of the band and laughing at everything and nothing because all the festive crowd around you is doing the same thing.

Witch and tyrant as she is — and perhaps for that

ITALIAN SEAS

very reason, since tyrants must know how to yield as well as how to rule — Venice will meet you in almost all your moods, and create new ones for you if you have none of your own.

I used to get dazzled with all the splendour of palaces and Churches; these last are so full of the glorification of great men — the monuments and ornamentation are so obtrusive that there seems scarcely any room for prayer. San Marco itself, dream of beauty as it is, inspires less devotion than many a humble country Church without a single work of art to recommend it. Without the ineffable Presence in the Tabernacle I should have felt more piously disposed at the foot of the lonely shrine out in the Lagoon, where the Blessed Madonna's picture smiles down from its tall tarred post on the flowers that one or other of her children brings there every day. The water laps gently at her feet, the sky arches blue overhead, and one can dream very good and happy dreams as one gazes up at her. But in San Marco, just as in the Doges' Palace, one is teased by two things — the necessity of thought and appreciation, and that horrid sense one has in so many places in Italy, of all the prying irreverence that expert — sceptic — heretics of the Ruskin tribe have brought to bear on it — as if the cleverest ant that ever crawled and builded underground could measure the courses of the stars!

To forget, and rest from, other people's thoughts, I used to walk a good deal through those narrow, noiseless streets where never hoof or wheel comes to break the stillness, where old houses lean close to share old secrets, and the shadows lie clear and cool through most of the daylight hours. When the sun does strike down he turns the grey to gold, seems to gather up all the perfume of

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

the small hidden gardens and fling it to you with a laugh on a spray of jessamine that has tossed itself over some ancient wall, or a tangle of red carnations spilling down through the scrollwork of a balcony projecting the wide curve of its iron bars far overhead, above the street. Through a half-open *portone*, dull green, like the narrow canals in the shade, you catch a glimpse of a courtyard deep sunk between high walls that are dimpled and lichenized to indescribable richness of colour, and gleaming here and there with some lovely fragment of bas-relief. Cupid with one wing gone and half a bow — a row of bursting pomegranates trailing off into nothing — a few letters of some once pompous inscription — who knows, who cares? They served out their own uses centuries ago and were stuck in here to corner a window frame, to key an arch, to replace a brick, but the sun and the rain and the salt sweetness of Adriatic airs have fused and mellowed them to the gold-white tint of fresh curds, smoothed their marbled surface to the velvet uniformity of magnolia petals. There is a fountain in the courtyard, of course, a rough half shell of stone set into the wall, where a slow jet trickles all day long and is just now spilling over the brim of the red copper "conca" that some woman has set a-tilt below it — and forgotten, perhaps, to run upstairs and pull in the wire that dangles overhead between two windows, flapping with garments of many colours like a string of signals at sea. For there are windows that look into the courtyard, row above row — and there she is, looking out of one, a red-haired, brown-eyed young creature with broad shoulders and sun-burnt throat, a strapping baby trying to wriggle out of its swaddling bands in her arms. In a minute she comes down, and clatters over the broad damp stones in her

ITALIAN SEAS

wooden clogs with yellow velvet toe-caps — and the sight of them sets me dreaming of the Venetian ladies three hundred years ago, picking their way to Mass through the narrow twisting “calle” on clogs, too, but such clogs! A narrow stein, twelve or fourteen inches high, resting on a base not more than two inches wide, and spreading at the top into a pretty little slipper, lined with velvet, and the whole thing was covered with crimson velvet and gold lace held in place by dozens of gold-headed nails! How any grown woman ever balanced herself on these stilts is a mystery to me still. My father at one time collected ancient footgear, and then forgot all about it; so it came to pass that in a corner of our old nursery at the Villa Negroni there lay the strangest heap of toys that any modern child ever had to play with — several pairs of these exquisitely ornamented “sabots” tumbled in with pink and scarlet silk slippers of the Watteau period — and later. One pair, I remember, with heels like knitting pins, so high that only the very point of the foot touched the ground at all. But, oh, how the little feet that wore them must have suffered! They had certainly walked in such shoes from childhood, for the foot had sunk down and lost shape until, pathetically small as the little slipper was, it was as lumpy and shapeless as a clenched fist and almost as broad as it was long.

By the time I remembered her again, after my mental excursion, my Giorgione beauty had twisted a towel into a turban, placed it on her red hair, and, lifting the “conca” on to her head with a turn of the hand and without spilling a drop, had disappeared up the dark stairway, all in less time than it takes to tell. Then, after stealing one fat, pink oleander blossom from the

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

tree in the corner, I went on my way, sniffing its nutty sweetness, to lose myself in the silent labyrinth of those little-trodden alleys and then be suddenly brought to a standstill by a deep narrow canal, unbridged, green, silent, serving as the water door to the rooms of dark old houses that frowned at each other across it. At every few yards stone steps led down, the water lapping confidentially over the lowest ones. From far away comes the long warning cry, "O, Premi"—that has puzzled generations of etymologists unable to give even a guess at its derivation. But everybody knows its meaning—you hear it a hundred times a day at every angle of the canals, telling those whom it concerns that a gondola is coming round the corner. The next moment it has swung into sight, the long, sinuous black thing cutting through the water so smoothly and imperiously, pulling up suddenly without jerk or sound beside the steps to let its fare slip on shore or its gondolier deliver a message—in the soft lisping dialect that sounds like insects' wings in a summer noon—to some one waiting for it on a balcony above.

It is the little things that are so real and charming in Venice, I think; the glimpses of life among the unchanging, persistent, common people, who live as they have always lived in the discreet still atmosphere of the back streets and the forgotten waterways.

Sometimes grown-up Venice is a little overpowering; one feels called upon to note every turn and building, for fear of missing some exquisite bit of architecture, some play of light and shade that must be remembered. Then

ITALIAN SEAS

one is glad to get away to one or another of the islands that lie around her, the nurseries where she played, and dreamed of the future, a thousand years ago. The dearest of them all to me is Torcello. We rowed out there one morning in August, when the sea was very calm and the sun a little veiled by clouds sweeping slowly up from the south. As we approached the island it seemed as if its few buildings were flush with the water; so low does it lie that the grasses and wild roses on the shore were dipping in the wash of the ripples. Some peasants had been cutting the grass, the scent of new-mown hay filled the air, and two great boats pushed out from some inlet and passed between us and the land, laden ten feet high with a cargo of fragrant green gold. As they met the breeze, up went the tawny sails and they skimmed away over the blue water like bees heavy with pollen. Then there was the cool rush of the turning prow, our gondola ran in softly to the strand, some one held up an arm, and I sprang on shore -- to find myself in another age and another clime. I had to wait a few minutes to realise what it all meant, for the "ambiente" was new to my senses. A stretch of turf and wild roses -- that explained itself -- youth and roses never need introduction -- but the still white Church, so long and low, with its slender columns like altar candles, its grave Byzantine lines -- that made me pause. It seemed as if some Saint had turned from his prayers to ask me what I came for, and I could only reply: "You must tell me -- there is nothing here that I have a name for, but there is something that was mine -- give it back to me!"

When I walk through a familiar room in the dark, a peculiar warning like a ghostly touch is laid on my forehead as I come near any object on a level with it,

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

and that same feeling came to me there at Torcello, I remember. It seemed as if it all were known to me, as if every flower and blade of grass called out, "We were here with you before!"—as if the small forsaken basilica had meant the heart of home in some lapsed period that life, as I knew it, could in no way account for. Its loveliness was so removed, so ascetic that one held one's breath for fear of disturbing its peace; the marble seats, the central throne, seemed all peopled by grave shades of presbyters, surrounding their Bishop, their long straight vestments marked with the gold cross from shoulder to shoulder and from neck to feet; I could almost fancy I heard their deep chant, first from this side of the mounting tribune and then from that, echoing in the cold spaces overhead and dying away down the nave among the columns. I believed the old story then, that Torcello had been the first resting-place of the hunted exiles fleeing seaward from the Huns; it was not that; I doubt whether the basilica was really built in the Seventh Century as the guidebooks say; Rialto had its Church long before Torcello; but Rialto has been the artery of Venice's throbbing vitality too long for any associations to cling to it now, while Torcello has stood aside, a recluse that has never wavered in its loyalty to the Past, and the Past is enshrined there for all time. I was surprised to find that it and I were friends. There are only two of all the dead and gone centuries of Europe that seem really my own besides the one I was born in --- and they do not belong to the chaotic times of Barbarian invasion and Byzantine supremacy. But the nameless sweetness of the airs that play so gently over the forsaken island said something that day that could never be forgotten, and the impression was so strong and so perfect that

ITALIAN SEAS

I have never wished to tamper with it by a second visit.

Strangely enough Torcello dismissed us with contumely, for as we left it in the late afternoon we encountered a fearful storm and came, I think, very near to being swamped. The thunder simply hurled itself from every quarter at once, the sea rose in inky billows of terrifying dimensions, and between them and the rain we were drenched to the skin, and very thankful when Sandruccio, who behaved splendidly, finally landed us on the slippery steps of our hotel.

For a day or two after that we stayed within call, so to speak, and had no fancy for putting out to the Lagoons. There were mornings when it was pleasant to be utterly and frankly frivolous and do nothing but wander under the arcades of the Piazzetta and in and out of the bewilderingly pretty shops. Such a spread of colour and glitter they were, and so tempting was it to pick up some of the alluring trifles for the new home we were going to make in Peking! The Murano glass at Salviati's I still think the most beautiful product of our own or any other time. Every tint of sea and sky and jewel gleamed in the ethereal beakers and vases; I remember a tall goblet of transparent topaz, shot with gold, that twisted and curled on its tendril stem like a newly opened convolvulus, spreading at last into a cup too ethereal for earthly lips to touch, so full of light that the most sparkling wine would have darkened it; and all round, for handles, were blown wreaths of milky iridescent foam, so faint that it seemed as if they must run down its sides and wet your fingers with salt spray. It was like getting into the Sea-King's palace under the sea to spend an hour at Salviati's; every lovely freak and fancy of sun and

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

water, from the brooding sapphire of secret caves to the last bubble of spray on a curling wave, it was all there, caught and crystallised for mortals to love and handle.

Those were the days of beads — one wore as many chains as one liked, the more the better — and for years I went round with a little Venetian rosary of blue and gold flecked with fairy roses round my neck. The mother-of-pearl overcame me altogether — long garlands of the tiny shells strung in fanciful patterns — each perfect in itself and shot with rainbows through its moonlight sheen — but the dignity of a married woman forbade the wearing of such things now. For years they lay about on my dressing-table reflected in the depths of a Venetian mirror which also accompanied me everywhere, a big oval set in a frame of translucent flowers and leaves, neither white nor silver nor pearl, but just the colour of the foam when the sun shines through it.

We went out to Murano once and saw all the processes of glass-blowing, and they made a little vase for me while I was there; but the secrets of those marvellous colours were not explained, and I came away with one cherished illusion intact — I am still sure that the glass-blowers have a tributary tribe of nymphs and fairies who gather their tints for them out at sea, in nets woven of sunbeams and moonrays!

During that honeymoon summer, Venice indoors, with all its matchless art treasures, appealed to me less than Venice out of doors. At the time of my first stay there I was only sixteen, but mature enough to appreciate what I was seeing, and my dear old stepfather was a splendid guide and allowed us to miss nothing. He was a strange combination, dear man — an expert at explaining beauty of colour and technique and stonily impervious to impres-

ITALIAN SEAS

sion or atmosphere. All that remained to him of his Calvinistic New England education was a giant conscience, to which other people's inclinations had to bow wherever he took the lead, as he did, imperiously, in matters of sightseeing. Often I would have begged off some expedition, feeling surfeited already with beauty and history, and longing to be healthily frivolous for a few hours, as youth needs to be sometimes. But it was of no use — go with him I must, and very glad I was of it afterwards, for, returning in later years to the places where he had piloted me about, I could make at once for the things I wanted to see again, without troubling my head about the others. One of these, alas! was gone when Hugh and I, just married, came to Venice. The St. Peter Martyr of Titian had perished in a fire. I had lingered before it long, as a girl, for there was something more than mere beauty in the painting; one felt there was truth, relatively as absolute as that for which the Saint gave his life — a picture not only of himself but of what he died for, loyalty to the unalterable essence of things as they are.

It is as hard to describe a beloved picture as a beloved face, but this one had been seldom copied or reproduced, and it is gone, now, so I will try. In a dark glade of the woods through which flamed red bars of sunset, two ruffians were attacking the Saint and his companion; Peter knelt between them in the foreground, looking up to Heaven, ere the last blow fell, with a wonderful expression of mingled pain and joy. The sweep of the drapery, the slight sinking to one side, showed that his strength was gone already, but through the physical anguish on his face there shone such radiance that one knew Heaven was already opened to his eyes — it was not trust, it was

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

certainty. The assassins, great bulky brutes, towered over him, but their figures were shadowed and dark and formless as evil itself; all the light, all the reality, were centred on the bending head, the dying eyes, the praying hands, the mystic cross that barred the priestly garment. I think there were palms and angels hovering overhead; but in a very old drawing, half life-size, of this picture — to all appearance contemporary with the painting — that I found among my dear father's possessions they were absent. In the background lay the body of the martyr's slain companion, martyred, too, but all the glory and the promise seemed to be for Peter — none for him. As I have said, I was only sixteen then, and knew less about Peter the Martyr than I did about Confucius or Genghis Khan, and for many years I wondered why the other martyr had remained nameless and unsainted. It shows the incompleteness of my education when I confess that it was only a year or two ago that I pieced his story together for myself. Let some one correct me if I am wrong, but I *think* the neglected companion was Conrad, the confessor of St. Elizabeth of Hungary, a man of high learning and much piety, but to whom, on account of his harsh treatment of the "dear Saint," the Church refused the honours of canonisation. But we know that Conrad was murdered for the Faith, and may be equally sure that it was owing to St. Elizabeth's prayers that Heaven allowed him to expiate his fault by a heroic death.

The Thirteenth Century, so rich in Saints, was appallingly prolific in heresies, too, and of these the Manichaean, ancient as the Devil himself, was just then the most aggressive. It had gained much ground in the north of Italy, and when Peter was born in Verona his whole family had been led away by it. But the true

ITALIAN SEAS

faith was still taught in the schools, and by the time the boy was seven years old he had learnt the Apostles' Creed, and neither blows nor caresses at home could shake him in his loyalty to it. Later he was sent to Bologna to pursue the studies considered necessary for a gentleman in those days, but Providence had other designs and uses for him. He was yet in his teens when the call came; he answered it at once, renounced the world, and took the Habit of the Preachers, the sons and followers of St. Dominic. The Breviary says, "With great splendour did his virtues shine in Religion," especially in his gifts of preaching, which brought the strayed lambs back to the Fold by thousands at a time. He had always prayed for the crowning grace of martyrdom, and when it approached he told those who loved him that his end was close at hand. The Manichæans feared him as much as they hated him, for he was as stern with the recalcitrant as he was tender to the contrite. He was returning, in the exercise of his ministry, from Como to Milan, when they murdered him. With his last breath he repeated the Apostles' Creed. The antiphon for his feast repeats the words used by Innocent IV in the Bull of his canonisation, which took place the year after his death, an immense number of authentic miracles having already testified to the honour and glory God had bestowed upon him in Paradise. "As purest flame leaps up from the depths of smoke, as the rose blooms on the thorny branch, so Peter, Teacher and Martyr, is born of faithless parents." "Soldier in the Preachers' camp, he stands now in the ranks of the warriors triumphant." "His soul was all-angelic, his tongue fruitful, his life apostolic, and his death precious." "The unconquered athlete battles strong in death, professing aloud the Faith for which he

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

bleeds. It is thus that the martyr triumphs as he does for the Faith."

To all but us benighted Catholics "the Faith," in these latter days, is a mere sun-myth, and the blackest heresy a disease that has lost all its terrors — as harmless as chickenpox or a cold in the head. Let us who know better at least have the grace to acknowledge our debt to the great ones who fought for our heritage and kept it clean with their blood!

CHAPTER XVIII

SOUTHERN SHORES

Melancholy Ravenna—Early Byzantine Architecture—Forests of Stone-pine—Smiles and Tears—The Need of a Little Misfortune—Monte Gargano—Millions of Spanish Merinos—Primæval Forest—A Forest Miracle—Church of the Apparition of St. Michael—Other Apparitions of the Archangel—The Revelation to St. Aubert—The Great Round Church—Order of the Knights of St. Michael—A “Maiden” Fortress of France.

THE real life of the Adriatic coast seems to diminish visibly when one leaves Venice and drops down towards Ravenna; it has been drawn away inland to busy cities that turn their backs on the sea, and the sea itself has sullenly withdrawn, leaving ancient ports empty and useless, like stranded wrecks that will never feel the leap of the waves beneath their keels again. One should visit Ravenna either in the heyday of irrepressible youth or much later in life when twilight is companionable and sympathetic; otherwise, its melancholy is too all-pervading, too depressing to be healthy. It is a city of ghosts, big-eyed, hard-featured Byzantine ghosts; the great mosaics are full of their portraits, and, with all the beauty of gold and colour, there is something sinister and deathly in those tall straight figures, stiff of gesture, rapacious of eye—likenesses caught unawares of people who in their hearts prized power and wealth above all other things in this life or the next.

I do not think any one Italian-born can feel much more than judicial admiration of the severe early architecture, perfect though it be. The sharp square outlines, the sulky

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

red — that might be rosso antico, so little has it yielded in tint or surface to the touch of Time,—all this, to me, seems misplaced under the dreamy blue of the Italian sky. Within the Churches the long aisles of double-storied arches cramp the spaces where fancy might soar and prayer take wing. They make an impression of narrowness, almost of Puritanism, that stifles emotion and frowns at joy. Of course, all this is rank artistic heresy, or will seem so to the crowd of submissive art experts who tumble over each other in their haste to repeat the dictums of a few famous specialists ; but I fancy there are many simple-minded people who will agree with me, all the same. It has always puzzled my own ignorance to understand how anything so un-Italian as the early Byzantine style came to take root and flower successfully on Italian soil. The radiant, light-flooded climate does so much to soften and humanise the alien growth that it buys its pardon for it in the end; but when some enthusiast, thrilled with admiration for what he has seen basking in southern sunshine, undertakes to reproduce it under the cold and lowering English skies, its true character is shown at once. It is all too akin to them. One escapes from the prison gloom of Westminster Cathedral to fly to the Brompton Oratory and sink down in a corner and thank Heaven that St. Philip Neri was a Roman, and that his sons and followers can still give us Churches with big airy domes and broad smooth naves where the light flows free, and transepts that open wide for worshippers and pool up the blessed sunshine like any bay in the Mediterranean.

But there was one point on which Ravenna, in my day at least (for it has suffered since then), yielded the palm to no Mediterranean port — the stately forest of stone-

SOUTHERN SHORES

pines that stood like troops at rest, for miles along the shore. The stone-pine is always beautiful, whether as a solitary, striking up, one shaft of grace and strength, against the sky, or as in great companies sunk to the knees in the deep turf-y mould that their needles have piled below them in the course of centuries. They grow thus in the South over many a green acre of villa land, sheltering an unending profusion of the delicate wild flowers that thrive in that rich soil. But for real forests of stone-pines you must go further north and skirt the coast. There you will see them in their glory, miles of them together, and, if you are quiet and will listen, you will learn a great deal. For, like the sons of the Prophets, they have secrets of their own that have never been shared with other tribes, secrets that have only been confided to them, and that is why the solitary pine is such a true solitary; he invites no companions from the gregarious world around; towering and alone, he seems to gaze at unseen horizons, to praise the Lord in the murmur of the far-spreading branches that crown the fretted column of his stem; as for Elijah on Mount Carmel, so for him the past and the present and the future blend into one great chord of trusting acceptance that no passing storms can shatter, no warm caress lure from its allegiance.

Have you, in some fleeting moment, caught the opening bars of an air that has haunted you afterwards for years, and then been led to where some great orchestra gave it to you in all its completeness? That was what happened to me when I first stood in the "Pineta" of Viareggio and heard the full-voiced chant of the pines and the sea. I realised that they were part of one another, so to speak, that the whisper of the villa pine in

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

the South is an echo and a greeting, brought by the wind from the family home in the North, where all the secrets of tree music are guarded as in some jealous ancient academy — no outsiders are ever privileged to carry them away! Psalms and marches and dirges, the wild call of the *Laga*, the C Major of the “*Te Deum*,” the wail of the *De Profundis* — the trees overhead and the surges on the shore will let you hear it all, and once heard it can never be forgotten.

It seems strange that Viareggio, the most prosaic and unpicturesque of all the Italian watering-places on the Ligurean shores, should possess this wonder still in its perfection, while the sister forest on the Adriatic side has been forsaken by the sea and devastated both by fire and by the frosts of that terrible winter of 1878-1879. We once abandoned Leghorn and went instead to Viareggio for our September bathing — a great mistake, only made up to us by the drives through the Pineta in the evenings. The discomforts and the ugliness of the town have long since been forgotten — perhaps because the ups and downs of existence have shown me far less bearable ones — and now the most vivid recollection is that of the enchanted air and fragrances of the Pineta. I think it will be so in the next life; if we win through all right, we shall remember nothing of earth but its sweetmesses, and the *very* wise people refuse to look at anything else, even now! The real philosophers, who are the real Saints, always seem to smile, though sometimes it is through tears. And there is one queer thing about tears — the people who have never wept don’t begin to know even how to smile, much less how to laugh. I am always sorry and frightened for them if they are nice good people, for we all have to pay our little tribute to trouble,

SOUTHERN SHORES

our tithe to humanity's debt; some get it spread all over a lifetime, some all in a moment, and these are the spoiled ones of the nursery on whom I suppose long discipline might have lain too heavily for their courage. I remember one startling case that impressed me very deeply, that of a nice American family — father, mother, and daughters twain — pleasant, harmless, good-looking people with plenty of money and perfect health. I liked being with them, though our views of life were severed as the Poles, mine reaching out to the impossible and sensational (I was very young!), and theirs so satisfied with the comfortable half lights of their own surroundings that they simply could not imagine anything desirable beyond.

One day I gave voice to my curiosity. "Do tell me about yourself, Mrs. ———," I said to the mother. "You look just as young as your own daughters. I don't think you can ever have had a trouble!"

"I never have," she replied, turning on me her mild, satisfied gaze. "I cannot remember a single sorrow in all my life, not a death in my family, not an hour's sickness even, amongst us all. We have all, *always*, had everything we could wish for."

It was the first time I had ever heard any one say such a thing, and I felt awe-struck and envious. A few months afterwards they all went back to America, at least they started to go. Their ship went down in mid-ocean, and the dear people reached home sooner than they had expected. But, for that sharp short suffering, it is just possible that life and its unending pleasantnesses might have made it hard for them to get to Heaven at all.

There was more than mere fun in Thackeray's tale of "The Rose and the Ring." When the Fairy Blackstick

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

frowned at Prince Giglio and said, "What you need, young man, is a little misfortune!" she asserted a most obvious and irritating fact. But it has one delightful side to it — that bitter draught that wise Doctor Fate insists on our taking from time to time; the good things, even tiny little ones that we never noticed before, do taste so wonderfully sweet afterwards!

But we were talking of shore forests. There is one, not of pine but beeches, on the Adriatic, exactly opposite Naples on the Tyrrhenian Sea.* Here a great promontory runs out towards the east, rising into mountains which have caused the whole to be called the "Monte Gargano," though each peak has its own name besides. People call the isolated district (which really belongs to the Province of Molise). Manfredonia, from the name of its chief town, long a pet stronghold of Suabian King Manfred, who founded and fortified it in the Thirteenth Century. But Nature protected the Monte Gargano in another way and a very effectual one. It was meant to be an island; on the western side the Abruzzi shrinking back in the real mainland, and the Adriatic, withdrawing slowly from the coast, have left a strip of land many miles wide — flat, marshy, abominably feverish — as a kind of defensive trench to cut off the Gargano promontory from the rest of Italy, and, as it were, remind it for ever that by formation it does not belong to her at all, but to the limestone plateau of Dalmatia, across the way. This vast plain (for it stretches far and far past the

* In our parlance all that is not the Adriatic is the Mediterranean, but the Italians only give this name to the waters that separate Italy and Spain from Africa, and differentiate the remainder as the Ligurian Sea — in the Bay of Genoa, the Tyrrhenian that Rome and Naples contemplate, and the Ionian, which washes up from Sicily under Italy's instep in the Gulf of Taranto.

SOUTHERN SHORES

promontory, towards the south) refuses to nourish a single tree on the few feet of soil which cover the mother-rock, but it provides such splendid food for sheep that, since time immemorial, it has been given up to them. Alphonsus I annexed it as a royal meadow in 1445, and imported his Spanish merinos with such success that two hundred years later four and a half millions of the beautiful creatures were herded by Neapolitan peasants on these pastures. Even now, though only a scanty half million graze on them, the sheep are lords and owners of all that ground. During the summer they are led to the mountains, partly for their own sake, partly for that of their keepers, who could not live in the miasma-haunted plains in August and September. In crossing, even by train, the twenty-two miles that separate Foggia from Manfredonia, the traveller is always warned to close the carriage windows; but in October the sheep are all driven back, and for weeks the three great roads that converge towards the flats are just broad ribbons of dust, through which comes the drumming of invisible millions of little hoofs. Along the edges of the yellow cloud phantom figures of shepherds dressed in sheepskins take shape at intervals and disappear again; and the dogs, dear faithful things, fly round and herd up the stragglers and nip at the legs of truants with the noisy joy that even long marches through the scorching plains can never quite suppress.

From every point on those plains Monte Gargano can be seen, raising its peaks against the blue, and clothed down to the very water's edge in magic beechwoods, homes of light and shadow and flickering gold, musical with song, fragrant with wild flowers, and carpeted with the rich mould that a thousand autumns have spread

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

along its ways. Nothing is ever disturbed on Monte Gargano. But for the sea and the fever-land, the forest would long ago have been cut down, its riches dispersed, its very site perhaps forgotten; but now all stands as it did from the first, and winter and summer have their own way there, and the herdsmen fold their cattle in the deep caves of the hills even as they did fourteen hundred years ago, in the reign of the holy Pope, St. Gelasius, when Heaven's gates opened one May morning to let through a flash of wings and the gleam of an Archangel's sword, and the fairest of Gargano's peaks became Monte Sant' Angelo.

And this was the way of it. While the rest of Italy was torn with the struggles of rival barbarians, and desolated by the rapacity of men like the Galla who drove his poor captives before him to the feet of St. Benedict at Monte Cassino, the peasants of Monte Gargano, safe in their isolation, lived as they live to-day, obscure, contented, minding their own affairs — which are chiefly their own cattle — with all their mind. In that wild place the cattle stray sometimes and it is hard to find them again, and so it happened that on the 8th of May, towards 493, or thereabouts, a young herdsman went climbing into the hills with some companions to look for a valuable steer that he had lost. Having wandered and searched for some time in vain, they were feeling deeply discouraged, when they perceived the creature hopelessly entangled in a thicket of briars at the entrance of a deep cavern. In fear, or irritation, one of the pursuers drew his bow and let fly an arrow at the animal, but, to the man's amazement, the missile turned in the air and struck him who had shot it. Terrified at this portent, they all fled and did not stop till they reached the town of Sipontum, far

SOUTHERN SHORES

below, where they related what had happened to them. Fear fell on the inhabitants, and no one had the courage to go and examine the cavern, though all were consumed with curiosity to know what, or who, it contained. In this dilemma they referred the case to their Bishop, and he replied that he must lay the thing before the Lord, and ordained three days of fasting and prayer for all the population, during which they were to join him in begging that Heaven's will in the matter might be made clear.

And the petition was granted, for on the third day the great Archangel Michael appeared to the Bishop and told him that the portent of the returning arrow was intended to show that he wished to have a sanctuary consecrated in that cave to the glory of God and in honour of the Angels. So immediately the Bishop came forth and, gathering all the people to him, led them, with prayers and chants, into the heart of the hills to the mysterious cavern, and, entering in, they found it hollowed out and disposed in the form of a Church, with all things ready, so that the Bishop at once said Mass there; and from that hour so many wonderful miracles took place on that spot that all men knew certainly that it was greatly favoured by Heaven. And from that day to this it has been a place of holy pilgrimage, where many sinners have been converted, and many afflicted with terrible diseases cured.

The Church celebrates the Apparition of St. Michael the Archangel on Monte Gargano on the 8th of May, but the feast of that spring morning is not the only one in which she commemorates his glorious interventions on her behalf. Far away in the North, another promontory, strangely like that of Monte Gargano, once encircled by

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

forests, too, but now cut off from the land at each return of the tide, the Mont Saint-Michel, stands as the last outpost of France, flinging defiance at its twin peak across the water in Britain. There is something strangely significant in the choice of these two points for the most notable apparitions of the great Archangel, who commands the heavenly hosts and watches with such sublime benignity over the destinies of men. One in the North and one in the South, the great lonely rocks rise sheer from the sea as if set apart as resting-places where the glorious pinions might be folded for a while, and the effulgence of the angelic countenance, too overwhelming for man to bear as it comes straight from the Presence of God, a little tempered and veiled by the mists of sorrowful earth. But one feels, too, that the purity of the lonely rock, the brave song of the wind, the long roll of Atlantic surge, and the chant of Adriatic billows were dear and welcome to the Warrior Angel, who holds our world in his hands as the Creator's chief Minister, who carries out His mandates, chastising when he must, but so tender to the contrite, so inspiring to the valiant, so royal in protection to the oppressed!

Of all the peaks that bear his name through the length and breadth of Europe none has been more signally his own than this one on the coast of Brittany. The East has its own, in Phrygia, where also the Archangel deigned to manifest his love for us poor mortals by his visible presence, and where the marvel of that love is commemorated under the title of "The Synax of Michael, Prince of the Army and of the other Incorporeal Powers." The Greeks always give such thunderously full titles to their Friends in Heaven! But I am sure they cannot honour their great protector half so heartily as he has been

SOUTHERN SHORES

honoured on the Mont Saint-Michel ever since he touched it and consecrated it for all time, in the Eighth Century. The details that have come down to us of that apparition are somewhat less full than those of the one at Monte Gargano, but the subsequent history of the French Sanctuary, which stood for just a thousand years as an impregnable fortress, is connected, right through, with humanity as the lonely shrine of the South has never been. Its name alone is like a war-cry—"Saint Michel au Péril de la Mer"—St. Michael of the Peril of the Sea—and bespeaks the invincible ally of the race that was once the ardent apostle of Christianity and its most valiant champion. It was to St. Aubert that the revelation came, when he was Bishop of Avranches, in the reign of Childebert III. The Archangel appeared to him in his sleep, says the Breviary, and bade him build a Church on the sentinel rock, round which already many pious hermits were gathered to serve God in solitude. Now St. Aubert was a man who reflected much before taking any new step, and he hesitated so long that the Archangel had to repeat his visit three times before he was obeyed—a great encouragement, this, to timid souls!—but then the Saint went to work valiantly enough. The rock was of a strange rounded shape, and he built on its summit a great round Church, as closely resembling the holy cave at Monte Gargano as possible. Then he sent to that place to fetch stones and relics from it, all of which he set with great honour in the newer sanctuary; and when all was done he established and endowed there a monastery of twelve "holy clerks for the perpetual service of the Blessed Archangel." But Richard I, Duke of Normandy, wished still further to honour St. Michael, so he sent away the clerks and established the

ITALIAN YESTERDAYS

Benedictines in their place; and the fame of the Shrine and of the many miracles performed there drew a great concourse of pilgrims from all over the world, especially royal pilgrims, from England and Europe generally, so that when the order of the Knights of St. Michael was instituted, this was their Chapter House. By that time it was already one of the most ancient and one of the few "maiden" fortresses of the realm, and never, until the monarchy succumbed to the Revolution, did a single foe to France succeed in setting foot within its walls. For a thousand years, seven times a day, the praises of God had rang out from it over the sea; for a thousand years the standard of France floated stainless above its battlements. "Monsieur Saint-Michel, Archange, premier Chevalier, qui pour la querelle de Dieu victorieusement batailla contre le dragon" (it is thus that his titles are given in the Institutes of the Order founded in 1469) took care of his own — till France drove him away.

THE END

